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# SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

## Shanti Nagar EVM faces 'glitch'

In Bengaluru South's Shanti Nagar constituency, the "BALLOT" button on the control unit was allegedly not activated when a voter tried to cast his vote on Friday. As per the Chief Election Officer's statement, it was only activated when the voter asked the third polling person to do so. Also, the total entries in the register were tallied indicating that no case of non-activation had taken place. *—Salar News*

# K'taka records 69.23% voting

## Mandya tops list, Mysuru is lowest

**BENGALURU, 26 APRIL**

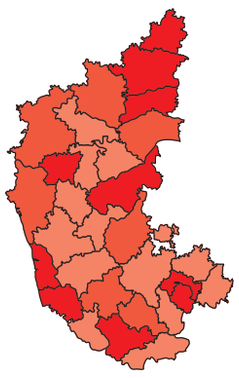
Voting was held on Friday for the first phase of Lok Sabha polls in Karnataka, in 14 constituencies, as Congress and BJP locked horns again on the electoral battleground in less than a year.

According to poll officials, 69.23 per cent voter turnout was recorded in the State. Out of 14 segments that went to polls on Friday, the highest turnout of 81.48 per cent was recorded in Mandya, followed by Kolar at 78.07 per cent, Tumakuru at 77.70, Hassan at 77.51 and Dakshina Kannada at 77.43 and the least 52.81 per cent in Bengaluru Central.

"This is tentative. It will vary slightly based on the detailed reports of the PRO (Presiding Officer)," an official said. In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the same 14 segments in the first phase had recorded a turnout of 68.80 per cent.

Karnataka Chief Electoral Officer Manoj Kumar Meena told PTI that barring an incident in Chamarajanagara district, the election process was peaceful in the state.

A total of 247 candidates — 226 men and 21 women — were in the fray for the first phase covering most of the southern and coastal districts, where more than 2.88 crore voters were eligible to exercise their franchise in 30,602 polling stations.



Long queues were seen at polling booths, as people, especially senior citizens and morning walkers came out to vote during the early hours since the voting began at 7am. Several new couples cast their votes either before or after their marriage on Friday. *—Salar News*

***>>>More on Page 3***

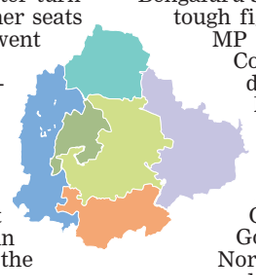
# B'luru continues its voter apathy

## B'luru Central saw the lowest turnout

**BENGALURU, 26 APRIL**

Continuing its voter apathy, the four Lok Sabha constituencies in Bengaluru recorded a low voter turnout compared to other seats in Karnataka that went to polls on Friday.

All the other constituencies in Karnataka, except Bengaluru Central, Bengaluru North and Bengaluru South, had a turnout of above 60 per cent in the first phase of the polls in the State.



Bengaluru Central constituency, which is witnessing a fight between Congress' Mansoor Ali Khan and BJP's PC Mohan, recorded the lowest turnout among the four at 52.81 per cent. The highest turnout among the four was recorded at Bengaluru Rural — 67.29 per cent. Bengaluru Rural is witnessing a tough contest between Congress' DK Suresh, MP and brother of Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, and Dr CN Manjunath, a noted cardiologist and son-in-law of former PM H D Deve Gowda, on a BJP ticket.

Bengaluru South, which witnessed a tough fight between sitting BJP MP Tejasvi Surya and Congress' Sowmya Reddy, daughter of Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy, recorded a turnout of 53.15 per cent. Shobha Karandlaje of BJP is fielded against Congress' MV Rajeev Gowda in Bengaluru North. The constituency recorded a low turnout of 54.42 per cent.

Several prominent personalities like Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, IT industry veteran NR Narayana Murthy, his wife and nominated member of Rajya Sabha Sudha Murty, cricketing legends Rahul Dravid, Anil Kumble, and Javagal Srinath cast their ballot in the Capital City. *—Salar News*

***>>>More on Page 2***

## 100% voting in Banjarumale town

Banjarumale, an interior hamlet in Belthangady taluk of Dakshina Kannada district, recorded 100 per cent voting in the Lok Sabha election on Friday. This hamlet has 111 voters and each one of them turned up at the only polling booth, completing voting two hours before polling ended at 6pm.

The hamlet is inhabited by forest dwellers, tribal farmers and collectors of minor forest waste. *—Salar News*

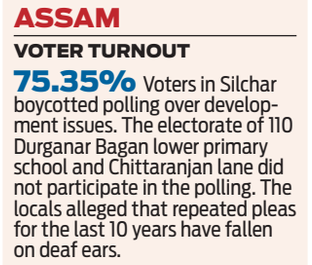
**TRIPURA**
**VOTER TURNOUT**
**79.58%** Tripura yet again recorded the highest voter turnout in phase 2, just like it did in phase 1. Tripura East Lok Sabha constituency recorded a turnout of 78.48 per cent. Election officials said there were some complaints from a few booths but those were "promptly addressed".

**MANIPUR**
**VOTER TURNOUT**
**77.95%** The strife-torn state voted to elect Outer Manipur's MP. Mao recorded the highest turnout of 89.84%. At KK Leishi Phanit polling station in Ukhrul, irate public destroyed EVMs and other items after alleged disturbances by armed miscreants.

**CHHATTISGARH**
**VOTER TURNOUT**
**73.94%** Amid heavy Naxalite presence, a polling booth at Sivni village in Balod district was decorated like a wedding 'mandap'. Voters have been complaining that photos of other candidates on EVM are bigger in size, but Former chief minister Bhupesh Baghel's is small and relatively unclear.

**JAMMU & KASHMIR**
**VOTER TURNOUT**
**72.32%** The Union Territory that has been marred by protest against the government over recruitment scams and paper leak saw peaceful voting in Jammu. Voters queued up outside a total of 2,416 polling stations to seal the fate of 22 candidates.

**WEST BENGAL**
**VOTER TURNOUT**
**71.84%** Unlike the first phase, which saw sporadic incidents of violence, Darjeeling, Balurghat and Raiganj saw smoother voting in second phase. Over 51.17 lakh people sealed the fate of 47 candidates. The EC registered 300 complaints, mostly related to EVM malfunctioning.



**ASSAM**
**VOTER TURNOUT**
**75.35%** Voters in Silchar boycotted polling over development issues. The electorate of 110 Durganar Bagan lower primary school and Chittaranjan lane did not participate in the polling. The locals alleged that repeated pleas for the last 10 years have fallen on deaf ears.

## Helpline comes to the rescue of 8,500 voters

**VAISHNAVI GOPALRAJ**
**BENGALURU, 26 APRIL**

Around 8,500 people from Bengaluru could cast their votes, thanks to a helpline that addressed their concerns regarding voting, EPIC cards and polling booths.

The helpline, which was running on Thursday and Friday, was set up by a collective of civil society groups to help people with the last-minute glitches regarding voting.

The helpline received around 10,000 calls and around 20 per cent of them were related to names being missed in the polling booth list though they have voted in the previous Assembly elections. Anucheth Kumar, an IT employee from the City, told Salar News, "I have visited Padmanabha nagar polling station and when I showed my voter ID, my name was not there. When I told them that I voted in Assembly elections, they cited technical glitches for it."

The voter helpline was manned by a team of 40 people from NGOs in the City. "Our aim was only to increase the voter turnout and we are not affiliated to any political party," said Tousif Massod, a volunteer of the helpline.

Election Commission's hotline C-VIGIL received 4,118 calls regarding the complaints from voters and they were able to solve 3,978 of them. *—Salar News*

## TEJASVI, CT RAVI BOOKED FOR PROMOTING HATE

**BENGALURU, 26 APRIL**

A case was booked against BJP MP and Bangalore South Candidate Tejasvi Surya and BJP leader CT Ravi, the Election Commission said on Friday. Tejasvi Surya was held for allegedly posting a video on a social media platform and soliciting votes on the grounds of religion. Meanwhile, CT Ravi was booked for allegedly promoting hatred and enmity between citizens through his social media post.

Earlier today, BJP candidate from Bengaluru South constituency, Surya, cast his vote in Bengaluru and predicted that Congress party may not win more than 30 seats in the Lok Sabha polls. *—PTI*

## Chamarajanagar: EVMs destroyed over poor infra

**BENGALURU, 26 APRIL**

The Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) were destroyed at a polling station in Indiganatha village in Hanur taluk of Chamarajanagar district on Friday during a clash between two groups of people over whether to vote or not in the Lok Sabha elections.

According to the district administration, the villagers had earlier in the day decided to boycott the polls citing lack of adequate infrastructure development. However, after assurances by the local officials, polling went underway. As per preliminary information, one of the groups wanted to vote while the other was keen to boycott leading to clashes between them. Officials attempting to convince them were also got in the altercation. The polling officials sustained minor injuries. All the furniture inside the polling booth has also been vandalised. The agitated villagers resorted to stone-pelting when police used lathi-charge to disperse the crowd. *—Salar News*

***PHOTO: SALAR***

***>>>See election page on 4***

**KERALA**
**VOTER TURNOUT**
**66.45%** Kerala was one of the two southern states to go on polls in Phase 2. Eight people died in the state of possible heat stroke or other heat-related issues, amidst polling. Technical glitches and breakdowns in EVMs and instances of bogus voting were reported from several booths.

**RAJASTHAN**
**VOTER TURNOUT**
**64.07%** It witnessed complaints of fake voting in Barmer. Cong MLA Harish Chaudhary alleged that the party's polling agent was thrown out of the polling station in Sheo. Jaisalmer Police forced Independent candidate Ravindra Singh Bhati to leave the district immediately for influencing voters.

**MADHYA PRADESH**
**VOTER TURNOUT**
**57.99%** While mercury hit 42 degrees, Madhya Pradesh saw a low voter turnout. At least 1.1 crore voters were enrolled to decide the fate of 80 candidates amid a direct fight between Congress and BJP. Satna is the smallest constituency here with the most candidates at 19.

**MAHARASHTRA**
**VOTER TURNOUT**
**59.38%** Among the eight constituencies, Buldhana, Yavatmal-Washim and Hingoli witnessed massive fight between the Shiv Sena led by Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and the Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena. A total of 1.49 crore voters will decide their fate.

**BIHAR**
**VOTER TURNOUT**
**55.77%** Bihar saw voters boycotting polling at 11 booths in Kishanganj, Bhagalpur and Banka. Officials of the prohibition department seized 72,747 litres of liquor (worth Rs. 2.62 crore) from different places in the state.

**UTTAR PRADESH**
**VOTER TURNOUT**
**54.85%** It saw the lowest turnout . People in Mathura whose current MP is BJP's Hema Malini, boycotted voting briefly over poor infra. At least 1.67 crore voters in Amroha, Meerut, Baghpat, Ghaziabad, Gautam Buddh Nagar, Bulandshahr, Aligarh and Mathura sealed the fate of 91 candidates.

**Voter turnout till 10.45 pm*

## BJP worker found dead in WB, family demands CBI probe

**KANTHI, 26 APRIL**

An 18-year-old BJP worker Dinabondhu Middya was found dead in West Bengal's Purba Medinipur district on Friday, police said. The body was found in a betel-leaf farm in Goramahal in the Mayna area, they said. Middya's family alleged that Trinamool Congress (TMC) leaders "kidnapped and murdered" him, a charge rejected by the state's ruling party. "My son was missing since Wednesday. We were being threatened by a few members of the TMC for quite some time. I am sure that my son was murdered by them," his mother Henarani Middya alleged, seeking a CBI investigation. Police said that after receiving a missing person's complaint, they started searching for Middya found the body. *—PTI*

**EXPLANATION SOUGHT**

# *SC junks plea for ballot, EVMs get nod*

**NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL**

As the country voted in round two of Election 2024, Supreme Court on Friday rejected pleas seeking complete cross-verification of votes cast using EVMs with a Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) and said "blindly distrusting" any aspect of the system can breed unwarranted scepticism.

Weighing in on the intensely debated issue that has long divided parties, a bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta delivered two concurring verdicts and dismissed all the pleas in the matter, including those seeking to go back to ballot papers in elections. It also maintained that "democracy is all about striving to build harmony and trust between all institutions".

Reacting to Supreme Court's long anticipated verdict Prime Minister Narendra Modi said at a rally in Araria in Bihar that it was a "tight slap" on Congress-led Opposition which now must "apologise" for committing the "sin of creating distrust" against electronic voting machines.

Congress on X said that it will continue with its political campaign on greater use of VVPATs to increase public trust in the electoral process.

The apex court issued two directives on the matter ***PHOTO: PTI***

The apex court issued two directives on the matter.

Pronouncing his verdict, Justice Khanna directed the Election Commission (EC) to seal and store units used to load symbols for 45 days after the symbols have been loaded to electronic voting machines in strong rooms. The apex court also allowed engineers of the EVM manufacturers to verify the microcontroller of the machines after declaration of the results on the request of candidates who stood second and third.

- Congress on X said that it will continue with its political campaign on greater use of VVPATs to increase public trust in the electoral process.

Request for the verification of the microcontroller can be made within seven days of declaration of the results after payment of fees, the court said. The bench suggested the poll panel can examine whether electronic machines can be used for counting VVPAT slips and also whether bar codes can be used for parties along with their symbols. *—PTI*

## Land sinks in J&K; 50 homes, infra damaged

**BANIHAL/JAMMU, 26 APRIL**

More than 50 houses, four electricity towers, a receiving station, and a main road were damaged in Jammu and Kashmir's Ramban district due to sinking of a road, officials said on Friday.

Ramban Deputy Commissioner Baseer-ul-Haq Choudhary visited the Pernote village, five kms from the district headquarters, on Friday morning and assured assistance to the affected families and restoration of essential services, including electricity.

Houses started developing cracks and the road connectivity between Gool and Ramban snapped Thursday evening following the sudden 'sinking of land' in Pernote village, prompting several families to move to safer places.

He said the authorities have summoned geology experts to know the cause behind the sinking of the land, while a team of district officials has been deployed round-the-clock to supervise the rehabilitation of the affected population and restoration of essential services. "The land is still sinking and our effort is to restore essential services like the road and electricity as our first priority. We will provide tents and other items and also organise medical camps for the victims," the deputy commissioner said.

Meanwhile, the officials said an alternate road via Sumber-Digdoal has been made operational to connect Gool sub-division with the district headquarters. In February last year also, at least 16 houses were damaged and road connectivity between Gool and Ramban was snapped due to sinking of land at Duksar Dalwa village in the Sangaldan area. *—PTI*

PHASE 2

## Doctor saves woman having cardiac arrest at polling booth

**BENGALURU, 26 APRIL**

A doctor, who was standing in the queue to vote at the government school in JP Nagar 8th Phase, came to the rescue of a 50-year-old woman who suffered a cardiac arrest. The doctor Ganesh Srinivasa Prasad administered Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) to the woman and saved her. Prasad, 36, is a native of Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh and works as a Nephrologist at Narayana Health Centre, Bommasandra. The woman was trying to take water from a can placed near the queue of voters. She suddenly felt dizzy, but was caught by the doctor and another person in the queue. The incident went viral on social media after the doctor shared the incident with a video on X. —*Salar News*

## HDK accuses DK Suresh of giving coupons to voters

**RAMANAGARA, 26 APRIL**

JD(S) leader and former chief minister HD Kumaraswamy on Friday alleged that cash and gift vouchers were distributed in Bengaluru Rural constituency, especially in Kanakapura. DK Suresh, brother of Deputy Chief Minister and State Congress chief DK Shivakumar, is seeking re-election from the seat for the fourth time. Kumaraswamy alleged that BJP and JD(S) workers, were attacked in Kanakapura and their shirts were torn off.

HD Kumaraswamy, wife Anitha show their inked fingers after voting in Ramanagara
***PHOTO: SALAR***

Money was also distributed since Thursday night, he said, adding that in Kunigal Taluk, a man died by suicide after Congress workers "attacked, pestered and threatened him." —*PTI*

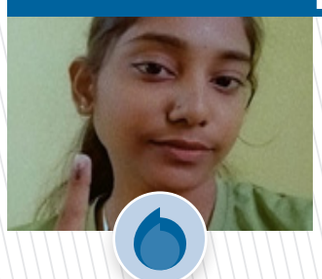
## Congress, BJP workers clash in Sarjapura

**BENGALURU, 26 APRIL**

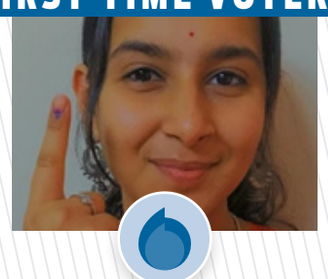
Workers from BJP and Congress clashed at the polling booths in Sarjapura, Bengaluru Rural. The clash began after Congress workers allegedly tore down a table on their way to the polling station. In retaliation, BJP workers allegedly threw tables and chairs during which BJP worker Prakash was attacked. Congress leader and alleged rowdy-sheeter Srinivas reportedly kicked Prakash in the chest, who had undergone heart surgery three months ago. Prakash was critically injured and was rushed to Vandana Hospital for treatment.—*Salar News*

## FIRST-TIME VOTERS

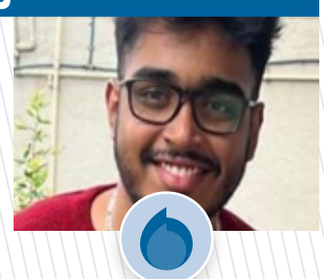
This is my 13th election, and I have seen all kinds of politics, both good and bad. I also saw people who did nothing. Every election I hope that something good will happen
-Rathnamma Aradhya, 85; Voter, Srinivasnagar



For the youth, this election is a chance to advocate for the issues that matter most to our generation, such as climate change and youth empowerment
-Priya Patel, 22; Student, Jayanagar



I feel empowered to shape the future of our country with voting and making my voice heard. It gives me a sense of independence and responsibility towards my country
-Akshaya S, 20; Student, Raghuvanahalli



Today is the day when I choose the 'neta' I want for my country. I stood in queue for 2 hours and helped the needy in casting their votes
-Shivanand Aradhya, 23; Student, Srinivasnagar

I feel empowered to shape the future of our country by voting and making my voice heard. It gives me a sense of independence andresponsibility towards my country
-Srikantha Naryana, 55; Accountant, Rajijinagar

# B'LURU BRAVES SIZZLING HEAT FOR BATTLE OF THE BALLOT

### In some places, buttermilk, juice and water bottles were offered to voters

**VAISHNAVI GOPALRAJ & MEGHANA PRASAD**
**BENGALURU, 26 APRIL**

Friday was anything but ordinary for the residents of Hanumanthnagar in Bengaluru. At 7 am, a vessel seller roused them from sleep, urging them to vote in the Lok Sabha elections. His loudspeaker blared: "Wake up, cast your vote, and exercise your democratic right to protect your livelihood."

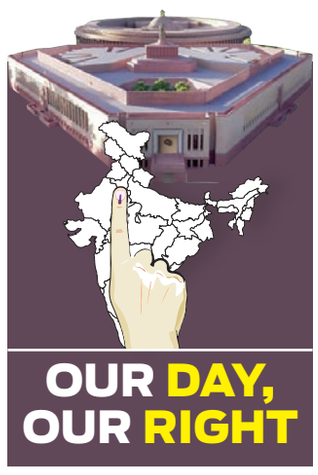
Anticipating the rising summer heat, voters started queuing at the Government Primary School as early as 6.45 am. "I usually go for a morning walk every day. I thought I would finish my voting rather than come back in this heat," Venkatesh Iyer, 45, a priest, told **Salar News.**

In other parts of the City, despite the temperatures touching a maximum of around 36 degrees Celsius and limited facilities at some polling booths, people from all walks of life came together on Friday to celebrate the festival of democracy. But in some places, buttermilk, juice and water bottles were offered to voters who had to swelter the heat and humidity.

Sree Veerandra Patil Degree College in Sadashivnagar had an uneven ramp, because of which specially disabled people had to be carried by the people. "It was uncomfortable for me and my fellow disabled friends to use the ramp to cast their votes," said Shruti Naryana, a specially-abled person and accountant. Similar incidents were witnessed at Government High School in Jakkur and Government Model School in Azad Nagar.

Hundreds wait in queues to vote for the 2nd phase of Lok Sabha elections in RR Nagar on Friday
***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

At some polling booths, voters had to sweat it out as there were no drinking water facilities in the searing summer. Some voters at the polling booth at Government Primary School in Chickpet had to wait for nearly three hours with no drinking water to cast their votes. "We all know how bad the Bengaluru weather has been. They should have made adequate drinking water facilities for the voters," said Prakash Leenakumar, a trader. Some braved their bad health to cast votes. "My health may be a concern, but participating in the electoral process is crucial for shaping our future," said Rajeshwari S, a housewife battling psoriatic arthritis, who cast her vote at a polling station of Christ High School and PU College in Kaggalipura, Kanakapura Road.




The sale of liquor was banned from 5pm on Wednesday till Friday midnight in Bengaluru. Despite the ban, booze was available across the City in the black market for double the price and since Friday was a holiday, tipplers made a beeline to bars and black marketers adjoining the bars.

Local auto rickshaw drivers had a field day on Friday, by offering a package deal for Rs 500 for pick up and drop to the polling booth and back home for a distance of 10 to 15 kilometres. —*Salar News*

# DIVERSITY OF NAMMA B'LURU UNITED BY VOTING

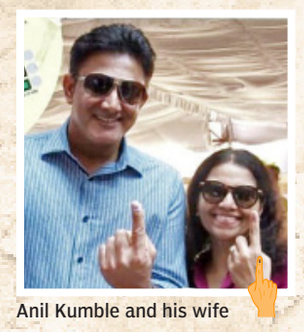
An elderly woman arrives in a wheelchair to vote in Shivajinagar

Ex-deputy chairman of Rajya Sabha K Rahman Khan and Congress Bengaluru Central candidate Mansoor Ali Khan with their family

Indian cricket coach Rahul Dravid votes in Bengaluru

Hundreds wait in queues to vote in Horamavu

Kannada actor Yash and his wife



Anil Kumble and his wife

First-time voters in Bengaluru

Actor Prakash Raj

Bengaluru Rural BJP candidate CN Manjunath & wife cast their vote

Congress Bengaluru North candidate MV Rajeev Gowda and BJP MLA ST Somashekar

Deve Gowda helped by his bodyguard as he votes in Ramanagara

Sudha Murty

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman

Free food was given to voters at Hotel Nisarga Grand, Infantry Road

Nuns wait to cast their votes in Richard's Town

Muslim women wait in queue to vote in DJ Halli

Vedic teachers and students after voting

A patient with breathing issues carries his oxygen tank to vote in Mico Layout

A senior citizen votes at 'Sakhi', a pink polling booth, in Jayanagar

***PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD/SALAR/X***

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his son Yathindra after casting their vote in Siddaramanahundi, on Friday *PHOTO: SALAR*

# He is scared, may shed tears on stage: RaGa attacks Modi

## RaGa accuses Modi of diverting public attention with lies

**VIJAYAPURA, 26 APRIL**

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday took pot-shots at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his attack on the grand old party, saying he is scared and may even shed tears on the stage.

"You have heard Prime Minister's speeches. He is scared. It's possible that he may shed tears on stage," Rahul Gandhi said addressing a public gathering in this district headquarters town in the party-governed State.

Modi has targeted Congress on a variety of issues in recent campaign rallies, including "mangalsutra", "redistribution of wealth" and "inheritance tax" charges.

Rahul Gandhi accused Modi of 'diverting public attention' through various means.

He pointed out that there are three to four core issues in India including poverty, unemployment and price rise.

Gandhi claimed that only Congress can eradicate unemployment, contain price rise and give people their due share.

Gandhi said in the present scheme of things, there is "no scope" for Dalits, OBCs, tribals, minorities and poor general category people.

Congress leader also promised the youth that his party will scrap the 'Agniveer' scheme if it is voted to power.

He dubbed the 'Agniveer' scheme in the armed forces offering three years services to the youth from 18 years to 21 years as an insult to the Army and soldiers.

Gandhi charged Modi with imposing a faulty GST where he introduced five different types of tax, which are hefty.

Alleging that PM was doing injustice to Karnataka, he said Congress will change the GST and rectify the injustice meted out to the people of the State.

Karnataka has a total of 28 Lok Sabha constituencies. The second phase of elections for the remaining set of 14 segments will take place on 7 May. *—PTI*

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi addresses a rally in Vijayapura on Friday *PHOTO: X/@INCIndia*

# No Modi wave in K'taka, but one in favour of Cong: CM

**MYSURU, 26 APRIL**

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday said there is "no Modi wave" in Karnataka but there is one in favour of Congress government's guarantee schemes, as he claimed his party will win about 20 out of total 28 Lok Sabha polls in the State.

He was speaking to reporters after casting his vote at his native village Siddaramanahundi in this district. Voting was underway on Friday in the first phase of Lok Sabha polls in Karnataka in 14 constituencies.

He expressed confidence about people "blessing" Congress party, as they did during the Assembly polls last year which saw his party scoring a thumping win. Asked as to how many seats Congress will win out of 14 seats in the first phase, Chief Minister said, "It cannot be said correctly as of now, as it is a secret ballot, but we will win the majority of the seats."

Responding to a question, he said, "We will win both Mysuru and Chamarajanagar seats." Stakes are also high for Siddaramaiah, as victory in his home turf of Mysuru and Chamarajanagar is seen as important, analysts say.

Stating that PM Narendra Modi's recent speeches are filled with "frustration", Siddaramaiah said, "The speeches he made were not as Prime Minister of the country. They are anti-Constitution. So I feel he is frustrated, he may have a fear of losing." Siddaramaiah also accused JD(S) patriarch HD Deve Gowda of indulging in "opportunist politics" and took a dig at the former Prime Minister for reportedly getting emotional and shedding tears recently during campaigning. *—PTI*

## HDD's 'no support from BJP' comment irks Sumalatha

*PHOTO: ANI*

**MANDYA, 26 APRIL**

Member of Parliament Sumalatha Ambareesh made her presence felt at Government Senior Primary School in Dodarasinakere village of Maddur taluk, in Mandya. Following her vote at polling booth number 164, the MP openly aired her grievances against Mandya candidate HD Kumaraswamy and JD(S) Supremo HD Deve Gowda and hit back at Deve Gowda's comment that she is not supporting JD(S).

Refusing to dignify Deve Gowda's comments with a response, Sumalatha expressed her disappointment. "I have discharged my duties diligently as an independent MP. I relinquished my seat to support Modi's candidacy for Prime Minister, thus lending Ambarish's legacy to the NDA," she stated.

Highlighting her supporters' unwavering dedication to the alliance, Sumalatha voiced her frustration at the lack of outreach from JD(S) leaders. "While I stand ready to participate if invited, there has been no communication from their end. Perhaps they believe they can navigate the elections without my involvement. Following Deve Gowda's statement, I have received numerous calls expressing concern. I did not initiate any promotional activities. Despite Kumaraswamy's visit to our home, there was no subsequent call to join the campaign. This disregard for my efforts is disheartening," she lamented. *—Salar News*

# Cong was distributing manifesto card, not gifts like BJP: DyCM

**BENGALURU, 26 APRIL**

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar dismissed allegations made by former chief minister HD Kumaraswamy, on Congress distributing gift cards to voters. Shivakumar clarified that Congress was distributing 'manifesto cards'.

Shivakumar criticised him, stating, "Kumaraswamy doesn't have any shame. He is no Sathya Harischandra. Can I show what BJP is distributing to the voters of Bengaluru Rural? Muniratna and Kumaraswamy are distributing gold cards. We are only distributing our manifesto card." he said.

Shivakumar hitting out on the allegations of Rs 10,000 coupons allegedly being distributed to voters, said, "At least they are fearing us. He should have contested elections in Bengaluru Rural. He has run away to Mandya like a coward while making an innocent person contest here."

*PHOTO: SALAR*

Shivakumar said Kumaraswamy has insulted women, saying they have lost their way due to guarantee schemes. Shivakumar also alleged that IT department officials were behaving like BJP agents. He expressed concern over the treatment of DK Suresh's driver's family during the raid.

"The people of Karnataka will vote wisely. Most of our schemes are benefiting women. Women, youth, farmers have all decided to side with the Congress this time," he said.

He predicted that Congress would win more than 20 seats in the State, with 10 seats secured in the first phase.

Criticising Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks about minorities he urged people to witness the change. He also emphasised Congress' accomplishments in just one year. *—Salar News*

## VOTING DONE RIGHT

Clockwise from top left: An eco-friendly polling booth was set in Mysuru and plants were given to all the voters who practiced their franchise; Muslim women voters lined up in Kolar's Srinivasapur assembly constituency; Three senior women officers of district administration wore specially-designed silk sarees sporting a message that seeks to encourage voter participation, which came in for all-round praise in Chamarajanagar; Renowned para swimmer KS Vishwas inspired everyone by casting his vote with his foot **PHOTO: X/@CEOKARNATAKA**

## 540 villagers vote after protest over booze shop

**KOLAR, 26 APRIL**

At least 540 people in Begli Benajenahalli village near Kolar, who had threatened to boycott the polls relented and casted their votes after Kolar MP S Muniswamy held talks with them.

The villagers threatened boycott over a liquor shop opened by the government-owned Mysore Sales International Limited.

The villagers were furious that the bar was set up on the village's main road, and the customers were littering the area with bottles.

The school was located just 150m away from the bar. Despite pressing for the bar's relocation and submitting a memorandum to officials.

As the authorities did not act, the villagers threatened to boycott the polls, and no voter turned up in the morning. Although district authorities tried to convince the villagers, their efforts proved futile. Later, Kolar MP S Muniswamy rushed to the spot and held discussions with the villagers, assuring them that the bar would be shifted in the next three months, after which the the villagers decided to vote. In an hour, nearly 80 voters turned up for voting, and by 6 pm, 500 voters had voted, said Chinnappa, a former gram panchayat member. *—Salar News*

### 107-yr-old among elderly who cast their vote in Kolar

**Bengaluru, 26 April**

Despite the Election Commission arranging home voting for them, a lot of elderly people aged above 85 cast vote by coming to polling stations across the State in Lok Sabha elections on Friday. At Basavannatha village in Kolar, 107-year-old Munivenkatappa came to the polling booth alone around 9:30am without anybody's help and exercised his franchise. K Sonnappa, 85, a retired tahsildar, came at 7.15am to cast his vote at PC Extension in Kolar. Shanthamani, 85, who is staying at Rajarajeshwari Nagar in Bengaluru, travelled around 95km with her son to cast her vote at Holur village in Kolar taluk. *—Salar News*

## FAMILY TRIP TO THE BOOTH

# *45 members of one family turn up to cast vote*

**CHIKKABALLAPURA, 26 APRIL**

The Badami family of Chikkaballapur which runs over a dozen of clothing shops in the City came in a group with 45 voters in the polling station to cast their vote in the 19th ward.

While the youngest voter in the family was around 20 years, the eldest is Vimalamma who is about 85 years said her grandson Arjun who looks after their cloth business. He said though all the voters in the family arrived at one time few elderly people left the site after casting their votes.

The grand children of the family Arjun said they have taken a decision to rush to the polling booth together to spread the message of staying together. He said that they have been practice for the past two decades. *—Salar News*

## M'LURU BJP MAN CLASHES WITH COPS

**BENGALURU,26 APRIL**

A BJP worker created a ruckus at Capitanio High School in Mangaluru on Friday after the media asked him about the chances of BJP's Dakshina Kannada candidate Brijesh Chowta against Congress candidate Padmaraj R. Padmaraj along with his family arrived at the polling booth at 7.12am and waited in line for around 1 hour to cast votes. Some media personnel filmed this and asked BJP worker Sandeep Yekkuru some questions. Yekkuru started a heated exchange with the media and allegedly pushed a police officer. —Salar News

*PHOTO: PTI*

## FRUSTRATED CM LASHING AT MODI: SHOBHA

**BENGALURU, 26 APRIL**

Union Minister Shobha Karandlaje on Friday took a dig at Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, saying he has been speaking against Prime Minister Narendra Modi as he is "frustrated." "The whole nation is standing with Narendra Modi, it's only Siddaramaiah who is speaking against Modi," Karandlaje told PTI Videos. She appealed to people to exercise their franchise "because today is a day to celebrate democracy. It's a festival of democracy." "This election will decide who will be our next Prime Minister," said the Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare. "If you want Modi as Prime Minister then you should visit the polling booths." She said she was hopeful of NDA crossing the tally of 400 seats in the on-going Lok Sabha elections "because people are standing with Modi for the development and security of the country". *—PTI*

*PHOTO: PTI*

## CONG WILL WIN MOST SEATS: HM

**TUMAKURU, 26 APRIL**

Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara said the Congress would win majority of the 14 Lok Sabha seats in Karnataka where polling was underway on Friday.

Speaking to PTI videos after casting his ballot, he said people have watched every "development in this country, how democracy and constitutional provisions have been compromised." "All this has been observed by the voter and in Karnataka, we have observed that how the central government has compromised the federalism in the country. They have not been able to provide assistance which normally should have been given to the State," the former State Congress chief said.

"I personally feel that we from Congress party, we believe that we will win majority of the seats in the State," he added. *—PTI*

**PHASE 2 POLLS** As 13 states vote in the second phase, here is a rundown of what happened where

# Repoll if NOTA wins: EC gets SC notice

## Plea in apex court seeks re-elections in every seat where NOTA gets a majority

**NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL**

In the wake of the recent Surat Loksabha seat issue, motivational speaker Shiv Khera has sought direction from the Supreme Court to give publicity of None of the Above (NOTA) as a "fictional candidate" and to frame rules to conduct re-election in the parliamentary seats where NOTA gets a majority.

A bench headed by Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud issued notice to the Election Commission of India (ECI) on Khera's plea seeking direction to frame rules to the effect that if NOTA gets a majority, the election held in the particular constituency shall be declared null and void and a fresh election shall be conducted to the constituency.

Khera, in his plea, also sought to frame rules stating that the candidates who poll fewer votes than NOTA shall stand debarred from contesting all elections for a period of five years and to ensure proper and efficient reporting/publicity of NOTA as a "fictional candidate".

Senior Advocate Gopal Sankarnarayan, appearing for Khera apprised the Supreme Court about the current situation in the Surat Loksabha election. In Surat, since there was no other candidate all had to go for only one candidate, he apprised the bench.

Khera, in his plea filed through advocate on record Sheeta Mazumdar, sought directions to the ECI to frame guidelines or rules regarding uniform implementation of the NOTA vote option with consequences for candidates who do not surpass NOTA.

The option of NOTA in Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) is the result of 'right to reject' possessed by the voter in our electoral system and before India, 13 other countries adopted negative voting or the right to reject, the plea said. *—ANI*

### WEST BENGAL

## Arms, ammunition seized in Sandeshkhali

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) seized arms and ammunition, including foreign-made pistols, during its searches at multiple locations in West Bengal's Sandeshkhali on Friday in connection with an attack on an Enforcement Directorate (EDS) team by a mob allegedly instigated by local TMC leader Shajahan Sheikh, officials said.

The team was attacked in Sandeshkhali -- a riverine delta bordering the Sundarbans -- on 5 January when it had gone to raid the premises of Sheikh in connection with an alleged ration scam. CBI during its probe got inputs of a large cache of arms hidden in Sandeshkhali. *—PTI*

### ASSAM

## Voters stranded due to train derailment

Nearly 150 passengers, including many electors, heading to Assam's Barak Valley to cast their votes on Friday were stranded due to the derailment of a train engine, even as political parties sought immediate action to transport them to ensure they can exercise their franchise. Several trains were cancelled, short-terminated or rescheduled since Thursday following the derailment of the engine of a goods train between Jatinga Lampur and New Harangajao stations under Lumding division. Ruling as well as Opposition parties urged the railway authorities to make alternate arrangements swiftly. *—PTI*

### TRIPURA

## Bru tribals vote for the first time

For the first time, the newly settled Bru voters of Tripura exercised their franchise for the General Elections to Lok Sabha 2024 on Friday.

Earlier, they had voted in the assembly elections held last year in March. The Bru migrants who had been staying in six relief camps of North Tripura district till 2020 now received permanent settlement in 12 locations across the state.

A Bru community voter said, "We have never voted in the MP elections of Tripura. We are very happy to participate in the democratic exercise. The total number of voters in this particular polling station stands at 609."

### BIHAR

## Bihar votes amid heatwave

The polling was underway in Bihar amid intense heatwave conditions with the mercury shooting past the 40-degrees Celsius mark in most parts of the state. Fifty candidates are in Bihar's five seats and over 93 lakh people were eligible to decide their fate, they added. Kishanganj recorded a voter turnout of 56.12 per cent, Katihar registered 55.54 per cent, Purnea recorded 55.14 per cent, Bhagalpur registered 47.26 per cent and Banka recorded 49.50 per cent till 5 pm, officials said.

### CHHATTISGARH

## Policeman on poll duty kills himself

A jawan of the Madhya Pradesh Special Armed Force deployed on poll duty died allegedly by suicide by shooting himself with his service rifle in Chhattisgarh's Gariaband district on Friday, police said. Gariaband falls in the Mahasamund Lok Sabha constituency where polling is underway in the second phase of the general elections. The incident took place around 9.30 am at a government school in Kudedadar village. The former Chhattisgarh chief minister Bhupesh Baghel, who is Congress' candidate in Rajnandgaon, on Friday said he has received complaints that his photos on the Electronic Voting Machines are smaller and unclear as compared to those of his rivals. *—PTI*

### MAHARASHTRA

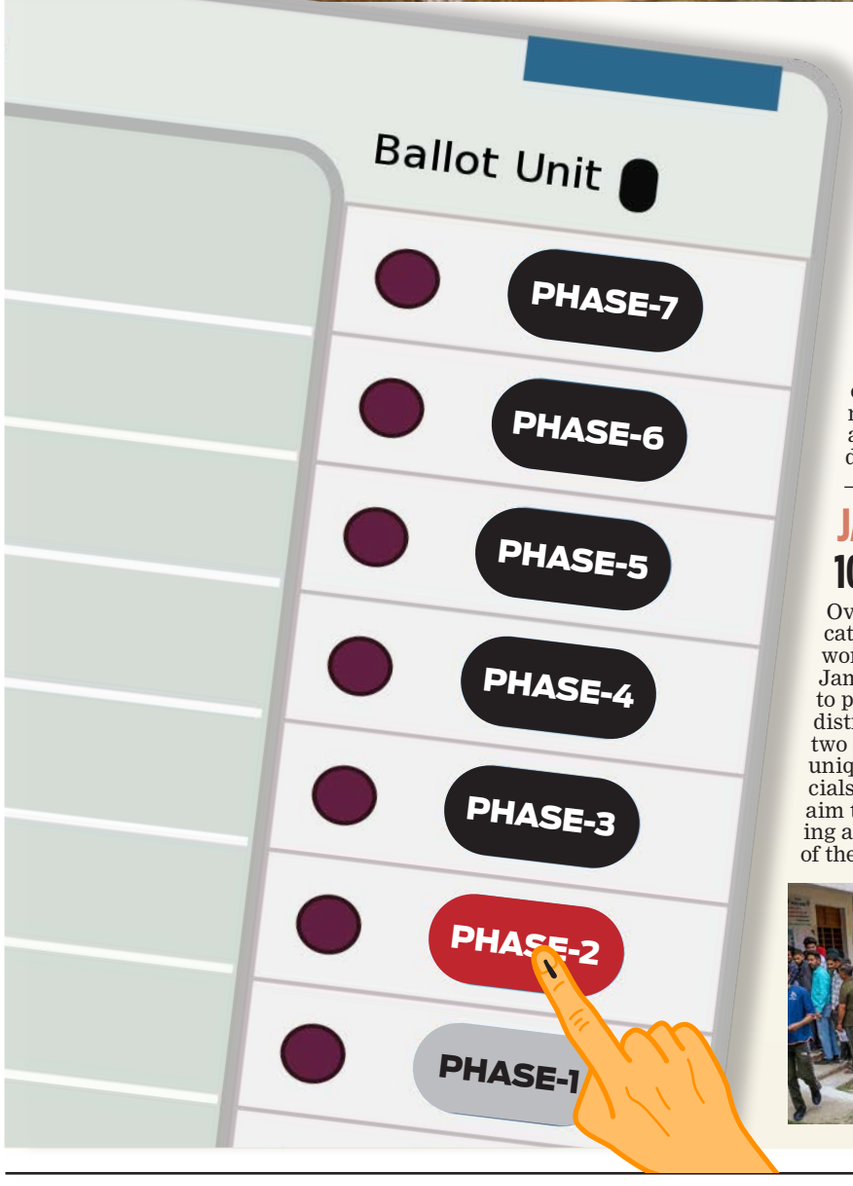
## Man damages EVM with iron rod

No untoward incident was reported during polling in Maharashtra constituencies, except a small incident. At Rampuri in Nanded Lok Sabha constituency, a 26-year-old man allegedly damaged an electronic voting machine (EVM) by hitting it with an iron object when he came to cast his vote around 4 pm, police said. He was detained and during his questioning, he told the police that he wanted a pro-farmer and pro-labourer government in power, he said. *—PTI*

### UTTAR PRADESH

## State records lowest voter turnout

Uttar Pradesh on Friday recorded the lowest voter turnout. Polling in eight parliamentary constituencies of Uttar Pradesh began at 7 am on Friday in the second phase of the Lok Sabha election. Among the 91 candidates in the fray in this phase are actor-turned-politicians Hema Malini, seeking a third term from Mathura on a BJP ticket, and Arun Govil, who portrayed the role of Lord Ram in the famed television serial "Ramayan". According to Chief Electoral Officer Navdeep Rinwa, the polling continued till 6 pm. Polling was boycotted for two to five hours but resumed in Mobarakpur, Sindhauni, Basau, Shiadgarhi, Nand Nagaria, Peeri and Bedna villages after assurances to villagers of addressing their problems on priority.. *—PTI*




### MANIPUR

## Voters brave all odds to exercise their franchise

Most of the polling personnel with EVMs arrived safely to the respective district headquarters. Instances of intimidation by suspected militants, altercations between Congress and NPF supporters, and damage to a few EVMs at a polling station in the Tangkhul Naga-dominated hill district were reported. At KK Leishi Phanit polling station in Ukhrul, irate public destroyed EVMs and other items after alleged disturbances by armed miscreants. BJP has not fielded any candidate and is backing its ally Naga People's Front candidate K Timothy Zimik. *—PTI*

### JAMMU

## 100 special polling stations set up

Over 100 special polling stations were set up to cater to different categories of voters, including women and persons with disabilities, across the Jammu parliamentary constituency, which went to polls in the second phase on Friday. In Jammu district, three women manned, three PwD manned, two youth manned, four green, 50 border and three unique polling stations were established, the officials said. The newly established polling stations aim to revolutionize the electoral process by ensuring accessibility and representation for all segments of the society, they said. *—PTI*

### KERALA

## Voters complain of slow poll process

Huge queues were seen outside polling booths across the state, with voters complaining that the election process was going on very slowly. As polling progressed during the day, eligible voters of all ages continued to queue up outside the over 25,000 polling booths in the state, braving the rising temperatures. Even a just married couple came to cast their vote in their wedding attire at a booth in Ponnani Lok Sabha constituency. The couple, who had a love marriage, told a TV channel that they were not going to waste their right to vote.

### MADHYA PRADESH

## EVMs allegedly tampered in MP

When asked whether there were any incidents of electronic voting machines (EVMs) malfunctioning, the state's Chief Electoral Officer Anupam Rajan said wherever any complaint was received, corrective steps were taken immediately. He said "We have made efforts to enhance the voting percentage, but the turnout nonetheless remained less. We are continuously making efforts to raise it by carrying out campaigns on the issue, including through the media," he said. Facilities like water, medicines and shelter were provided at all the polling booths, the official said. *—PTI*

### RAJASTHAN

## Protest, wedding, politics: State sees all the drama

In Banswara, no voter reached the Adibheet polling booth during the initial hours. The locals have certain demands regarding compensation against land acquired for a power plant and have declared to boycott the elections. A 108-year-old woman, Bhuri Bai, cast her vote at the Gunjara polling booth in the Kota-Bundi constituency. A groom, Radhe Suthar, cast his vote at Bhadsoda in Chittorgarh before going for his wedding procession. Congress MLA from Barmer's Baytoo Harish Chaudhary alleged that the party's polling agent was thrown out of the polling station in Sheo and demanded from the authorities to stop the voting. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PIXABAY

## 4 people killed in Rae Bareli road accident

**RAE BARELI, 26 APRIL**

Four people were killed and as many were injured on Friday when their car dashed into a culvert and hit a tree on the roadside, police said. According to police, the incident took place around 3am near Malin Purva village of Mill Area police station area, when the victims, part of a marriage procession, were returning from Fursatganj in Amethi. Their car, a Scorpio, crashed into a culvert and then hit a tree on the roadside leaving all the people in the car injured, SHO Sanjay Singh said. The victims were rushed to a hospital where the doctors declared four of them -Pankaj Pal,30, Raghavendra Yadav,50, Deepak Pal,28, and Awadhesh Pal,45, -- brought dead, the SHO said.—*PTI*

## J&K: 2 terrorist killed, 2 jawans injured in gun battle

**SRINAGAR, 26 APRIL**

Two terrorists were killed while as many Army personnel got injured on Friday as a gunbattle between the militants and security forces continued for the second day in Jammu and Kashmir's Baramulla district, officials said.The encounter began on Thursday at Check Mohalla Nowpora in the Sopore area of north Kashmir. After the night's lull, a fresh exchange of firing took place on Friday morning, they said.Two terrorists have been killed so far, according to the officials.Two army personnel injured in the gunfight have been shifted to a hospital for treatment, they said.A civilian was also injured near the site of the encounter on Thursday.—*PTI*

## 11 members of organised crime gang nabbed

**CHANDIGARH, 26 APRIL**

The Punjab Police Anti-Gangster Task Force, in a joint operation with central agencies and Jammu and Kashmir Police, has arrested 11 members of an organised criminal gang. "In a major breakthrough, #AGTF Punjab in a joint operation with Central agencies & J&K Police, has arrested 11 members of an organised criminal gang operated by Charanjit Singh @ Raju Shooter," Punjab's Director General of Police, Gaurav Yadav said in a post on X on Friday. Yadav said the gang, in September 2023, was involved in a failed attempt to loot a bank in Dhotian village in Tarn Taran during which a police officer was critically wounded in firing by the accused."On 16 April, 2024 associates of Raju shooter had orchestrated his escape from Civil Hospital, Tarn Taran where he was admitted for treatment," the DGP said in his post.—*PTI*

## Girder connecting Mumbai-Worli Sea link launched

**MUMBAI, 26 APRIL**

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) successfully launched a massive 25,000-ton girder connecting the south-bound corridor of the coastal road to the Bandra Worli Sea Link in the early hours of Friday, the civic body said. In a release, the BMC said that the process to launch the bow-string-arch-type girder, spanning 136 metres, at Worli started at 2am and was completed at 3.25am. According to the civic body, the engineering feat is the first in India to involve such installation in the sea. The girder, which is 18 to 21 metres wide, will connect the 10.5 kilometre stretch of the coastal road to the Bandra-Worli sea link. The southbound corridor of the coastal road between Worli and Marine Lines was opened for traffic on 11 March this year but had not been connected with the sea link. —*PTI*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi waves at supporters during a public meeting for Lok Sabha polls, in Munger on Friday PHOTO: PTI

# WB's youth suffering because of TMC: Modi

## PM calls TMC corrupt

**MALDA, 26 APRIL**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday lambasted the TMC over the cancellation of around 26,000 jobs following a High Court order, asserting that the youth of West Bengal have suffered due to the "cut-and-commission" culture of the party, which is now "synonymous with scams".

Speaking at an election rally in Malda, Modi highlighted the plight of the youth who, in desperation, took loans to pay bribes to TMC leaders.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday asserted that the Supreme Court judgment on cross-verification of votes was a "tight slap" on the Congress-led opposition which must "apologise" for committing the "sin of creating distrust" against Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs).

Addressing an election rally in Araria Lok Sabha constituency in Bihar, he also charged the opposition with trying to "steal" reservations meant for OBCs, SCs and STs "for the sake of their favourite vote bank of Muslims".

He emphasised how the TMC's involvement in scams has not only jeopardised the future of Bengal's youth, but has also adversely affected thousands of families.

Earlier this week, the Calcutta High Court declared the recruitment process of the State Level Selection Test-2016 (SLST) in West Bengal government-sponsored and aided schools as "null and void," ordering the cancellation of all appointments made through it.

"Under TMC rule, only one thing exists - scams totalling thousands of crores. The culprit is TMC, but the entire state is forced to pay for its deception and scams," he said.

Referring to recent incidents in Sandeshkhali, where allegations of sexual abuse against TMC leaders surfaced, Modi criticised the state government for its alleged apathy towards the victims. —*PTI*

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee adressing people in a public rally on Friday PHOTO: PTI

# 'Job-eater BJP': Didi hits back at Modi

## She says BJP 'conspired'

**PINGLA/ GARBETA 26 APRIL**

Taking a dig at the BJP, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday dubbed it a "job-eater" and said the people of West Bengal would not forgive its leaders for "conspiring to snatch" the livelihood of nearly 26,000 teachers.

Addressing an election rally in support of TMC's Ghatal candidate Dev, Banerjee also attacked the CPI(M) and Congress in the same breath, calling the two parties "eyes and ears" of the BJP in the state."You have heard about maneater tigers, but have you heard about the job-eater BJP? Did you see the glee on the face of the leaders of the BJP, CPI(M) and Congress after so many people were rendered jobless by the court?" she asked the people at the rally.

"I don't want to comment on the judgement or say anything about the judges. But after taking away the jobs of 26,000 youths, you are asking them to return the salary along with 12 per cent interest. Can you take jobs like that? Give them a chance to rectify. How can 26,000 people be treated in such a way?" she asked.

The Calcutta High Court on Monday ordered the cancellation of appointments of 25,753 teachers and non-teaching staff made through the recruitment process of State Level Selection Test-2016 (SLST) in state-run schools, declaring the selection process as "null and void".Banerjee said the "conspiracy" was evident from the reactions of the leaders of oppositions after the court gave its verdict."The people of West Bengal will not forgive these parties for their roles. They also filed PILs in the court and stalled any new initiative by the state government to fix the anomalies," she said. Banerjee alleged the opposition BJP was again "conspiring" to stall the state government's decision to recruit 10 lakh people. —*PTI*

ROW OVER AUSSIE JOURNO

# India can speak about its own visa policy: US

**WASHINGTON, 26 APRIL**

The US has refrained from commenting on allegations that India denied the visa renewal of an Australian journalist, saying New Delhi can speak about its visa policy.

Avani Dias, the South Asia Bureau Chief of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) left India on 19 April, and she claimed on Tuesday that she was denied an extension of her visa by the Indian government because of her reports "crossed a line".

"After Australian Government intervention, I got a mere two-month extension...less than 24 hours before my flight," she said in a post on 'X'.

"We were also told my election accreditation would not come through because of an Indian Ministry directive. We left on day one of voting in the national election in what Modi calls 'the mother of democracy'," she added.

Responding to allegations, State Department Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel said on Thursday: "government of India can speak to its own visa policy. That is not something I am going to opine on from here."

"Broadly, we have been clear with countries around the world about the integral role that a free press plays in the fabric of democracy. That is why we come up here and take questions regularly. But I will let the officials in India speak to the specific," Patel told reporters at a news conference.

Government sources in India said her allegation is incorrect and misleading.

They said Dias was found to have violated visa rules while undertaking her professional pursuits.

Despite this, on her request, she was assured that her visa would be extended for the coverage of the general elections, the sources said, adding her previous visa was valid till 20 April."The contention of Avani Dias, the South Asia Correspondent of Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), that she was not allowed to cover elections and was compelled to leave the country is not correct, misleading and mischievous," a source said in New Delhi.

The sources said Dias paid the visa fee on 18 April, and her visa was extended till the end of June the same day.

She, however, chose to leave India on 20 April, they said, adding at the time of her departure, she held a valid visa and her extension of visa stood approved.Her point about not being permitted to cover elections is also factually incorrect, the sources said. Coverage of election activities outside of booths is permitted to all Journalist Visa holders, they added. —*PTI*

POLL OFFICIALS SAY

# No model code violation found in Ajit Pawar's 'funds for votes remark'

**PUNE, 26 APRIL**

The returning officer of Baramati Lok Sabha constituency has filed a report stating that there was no prima facie evidence of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar violating the Model Code of Conduct through his "funds for votes" remarks.

The Sharad Pawar-led NCP(SP) had filed a complaint against Ajit Pawar with the Election Commission of India alleging the violation of the Model Code of Conduct and the Representation of the People Act.

At a poll rally at Indapur in Baramati constituency, Ajit Pawar recently said, "...As far as funds are concerned, we will cooperate to give you as much as you want, but at the same time, the EVM button needs to be pressed in abundance. If the EVM button is pressed in abundance, I will also feel good allocating funds, or else, I will have to restrict myself,"

PHOTO: PTI

The remarks had drawn criticism from the opposition, with NCP (SP) moving EC seeking action against Ajit Pawar, who heads the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP).Kavita Dwivedi, returning officer of Baramati, said they launched a probe after receiving the complaint and sought Ajit Pawar's response.

Dwivedi confirmed that she has submitted a report to the Chief Election Officer stating that she had gone through the video of Ajit Pawar's speech and there was no violation of the Model Code of Conduct."The remarks in the video do not mention the name of a particular candidate for whom votes have been sought. He is heard saying that press the buttons of 'our' machine so that he can allocate the funds," said Dwivedi. —*PTI*

# TN: Forest officials trap leopard which killed farm animals; wild tusker killed

**ERODE, 26 APRIL**

Forest officials here on Friday said that they trapped a big leopard which had killed a host of farm animals a month ago. According to forest officials in the Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve (STR), a month ago the leopard entered into the cattle shed owned by one Bagyalakshmi at Malkuth Thotti area located within the Thalavadi forest range under the STR here and killed six goats, 20 poultry birds, two calves of a cow and five dogs.

Based on a complaint given by Bhagyalakshmi, the forest officials placed a cage near her plot a few days ago.

The villagers heard the noise of a leopard coming and found it inside the cage. Later they informed the forest personnel who visited the spot and later took the animal to release it into an interior part of the forest.

A leopard killed cattles in Tamil Nadu PHOTO: PIXABAY

**Wild Tusker found dead**

An 18 year old male elephant was found dead with its tusks missing near Thalavadi in Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve near here on Friday.

According to forest officials, while conducting their regular patrol duty in Gumdapuram forest area located near Thalavadi under the STR, they found a dead elephant. The doctor examined the carcass and said that it was an 18-year-old male. The officials suspect that the elephant might have been poisoned to death. —*PTI*

# Govt to dismiss official in sexual harassment case

**NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL**

The Union government has initiated the process of dismissing a DIG ranked former chief sports officer of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) on charges of sexual harassment levelled against him by some women working in the paramilitary force, official sources said Friday.

A notice for dismissal has been issued against Deputy Inspector General Khajan Singh after the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) accepted the recommendation of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), they said.

The final orders will be issued after taking into consideration the reply received from the accused officer within 15 days, the sources said. —*PTI*

# 'Renewable energy capacity: G7 falling short'

**NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL**

G7 economies are currently targeting doubling of renewable energy capacity by 2030, falling short of the tripling goal agreed at the UN climate conference in Dubai last year, according to an analysis by global energy think-tank Ember.

At the UN's COP28 climate change conference in December, world leaders, including all G7 members, reached a historic agreement to triple global renewable energy capacity by 2030.

"The G7 needs to set a goal to triple their renewable capacity," said Katye Altieri, electricity analyst at Ember.

PHOTO: PTI

"Last year, the G7 agreed targets for solar and offshore wind. Given the COP28 agreement, these goals are now outdated and need to be aligned with a tripling of global renewables.

The acceleration of solar shows the renewables goal is increasingly achievable," she said.

According to the International Energy Agency, tripling global renewable energy capacity and doubling energy efficiency is crucial to limiting the average temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

According to Ember's 2030 Global Renewable Target Tracker, the G7 economies are collectively targeting just over a doubling of 2022 capacity from 0.9 terawatts (TW) at the end of 2022 to 2 TW of renewables capacity by 2030.

A tripling of renewable capacity would require the G7 to reach 2.7 TW by 2030, leaving a 0.7 TW gap between current targets and a tripling-aligned goal. —*PTI*

Italy, this year's host of the G7, along with Germany and the UK, are leading the way with 2030 targets that are more than doubling of the 2022 capacity. —*PTI*

NEW STUDY

# *Stunting risk higher among hill children*

**NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL**

Children living in India's hills and mountains are at an increased risk of stunted growth, with the risk increasing with rise in altitude, according to new research published in the British Medical Journal Nutrition, Prevention & Health.

Analysing data of more than 1.65 lakh children under five years of age, researchers observed that stunting was more common among those born as a third or later child to parents, and those having a small size at birth. Data was included from the 2015-16 National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4) for analysis. The WHO standards were used to define stunting. The researchers, including those from Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Manipal, suggested that continuous exposure to high altitude environment can reduce appetite, and limit oxygen and nutrient absorption, even as, they said, a direct causal link was not established in the observational study.

Researchers observed that stunting was more common among those born as a third or later child to parents PHOTO: PTI

The team also said that food insecurity in hilly and mountainous regions tends to be more, arising out of lower crop yields and harsher climate. Providing access to healthcare in these regions, including implementing nutritional programmes, is challenging, they said. The overall prevalence of stunting among these children was found to be 36 per cent. Prevalence was higher among children aged 1.5-5 years (41 per cent) than among those under 1.5 years of age (27 per cent).

Children living at locations 2000 metres or more above sea level were found to be 40 per cent more at risk of stunting than those living 1000 metres above sea level.

The analysis also found that stunting was prevalent in 44 per cent of third borns or children higher in birth order among siblings, compared to 30 per cent in firstborns. Stunting rates were still higher (45 per cent) among children who were small or very small at birth. They also found that post-pregnancy care, including clinic visits, vaccinations, and health supplements, and being located closer to health facilities, were protective factors. —*PTI*

# Maharashtra farmer's son bags 1st rank in JEE mains

**WASHIM, 26 APRIL**

With perseverance and hard work over the last two years, Nilkrishna Gajare, son of a farmer from Maharashtra's Washim district, has secured All India Rank 1 in the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) Mains.

Hailing from Belkhed, a remote village in Washim, Nilkrishna followed a rigorous schedule, dedicating more than 10 hours to prepare for the exams every day.

The results of the JEE Mains conducted by the National Testing Agency were announced on Thursday.

Talking to PTI over the phone, Nilkrishna's father, Nirmal Gajare, said he had no words to express his happiness over his son's success.

"Nilkrishna has always been a brilliant student and was good at sports. He participated in the district and national level tournaments in archery," Nirmal Gajare said.

PHOTO: YOUTUBE

The 19-year-old is pursuing his studies at Shree Dnyaneshwar Maskuji Burungale Science and Arts College, Shegaon.

"I wanted him to do well in studies and life and motivated him. I want him to achieve things I never could," Gajare said, who is over the moon about his son's success.

Nilkrishna wishes to study at IIT Bombay and would work towards becoming a scientist, he said. —*PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDA

## Malaysia's ex-PM faces corruption probe

**KUALA LUMPR, 26 APRIL**

Malaysia's former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad is being investigated in connection with a corruption probe involving his sons, the country's anticorruption agency has confirmed. Azam Baki, Chief commissioner of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC), said that Mahathir was "among those being investigated". In January, the MACC ordered Mahathir's two eldest sons, Mirzan Mahathir and Mokhzani Mahathir, to declare their assets as part of inquiries prompted by the Pandora and Panama Papers leaks. Mahathir is a vocal critic of sitting Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim. *—Al Jazeera*

## Ukraine detains minister in $7M corruption case

**KYIV, 26 APRIL**

Ukraine's Agriculture Minister Mykola Solsky has been detained on suspicion of being involved in a multi-million-dollar landgrab scheme involving state property, according to prosecutors. An anticorruption court ordered Solsky to be held in custody until 24 June, with bail set at USD 1.9 million prosecutors said on Friday. He could face up to 12 years in jail if convicted. Solsky is accused of illegally seizing state-owned land worth 291 million hryvnias ($7.36m) and trying to obtain other land worth USD 4.8 million. The allegations relate to events between 2017 and 2021, before he started as Ukraine's wartime agriculture minister in March 2022, shortly after the start of Russia's invasion. *—PTI*

## Afghanistan: Rains destroy nearly 70 schools, madrassas

**KABUL, 26 APRIL**

Recent rains and floods have destroyed nearly 70 schools and madrassas in Uruzgan province of Afghanistan, and lack of sufficient funds is hampering their repair work, according to TOLOnews. Shamsullah Kamran, the head of Education in Uruzgan said that the Uruzgan Education Department lacks sufficient funds to rebuild these schools. He said, "As a result of the rains and floods, approximately seventy schools have been completely or partially destroyed. If these schools do not receive attention from organizations, we will face significant problems." Several teachers and students in the province claim that the educational process has slowed down as a result. They say most of the students from the schools that were damaged are now studying in open areas or private residences. —ANI

## NIA arrests accused in Indian mission attack in UK

**LONDON, 26 APRIL**

Inderpal Singh Gaba, a resident of Hounslow in west London, was arrested in India on Thursday by National Investigation Agency (NIA for committing offences under Section 13(1) of UA (P) Act, Section 2 of the Prevention of Insult of National Honour Act and Section 34 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), official sources here said. There were two major violent protests in front of India House in London on 19 and 22 March, 2023. On 19 March, a large group of protesters were found to have attacked Indian officials, damaged the High Commission building and insulted the Indian National Flag. On 22 March, they chanted anti-India slogans, insulted the Indian National Flag again and indulged in unlawful and threatening behaviour, according to the reports logged by the NIA following the incidents. *—PTI*

# Blinken meets Xi, discusses bilateral issues

## Xi said two countries had 'made some positive progress' since he met with US Prez Biden

**BEIJING, 26 APRIL**

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met Friday with Chinese President Xi Jinping and senior Chinese officials, warning of the dangers of misunderstandings and miscalculations as the United States and China butted heads over a number of contentious bilateral, regional and global issues.

Blinken met with Xi in Beijing after holding talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Public Security Minister Wang Xiaohong.

Talks between the two sides have increased in recent months, even as differences have grown.

"We are committed to maintaining and strengthening lines of communication between us," so that the two sides can prevent any "any miscommunications, any misperceptions and any miscalculations," Blinken said.

Earlier, Blinken and Wang also underscored the importance of keeping lines of communication open as they lamented persistent and deepening divisions that threaten global security. Xi said the two countries had "made some positive progress" since he met with US President Joe Biden last year. Their comments hinted at a long list of differences to be discussed, including Taiwan and the South China Sea, and trade and human rights, China's support for Russia and the production and export of synthetic opioid precursors.

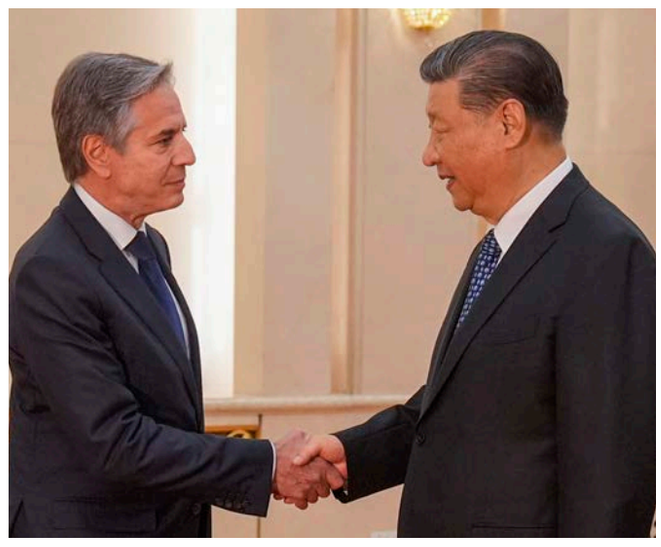
"Overall, the China-US relationship is beginning to stabilise," Wang told Blinken at the start of about 5 1/2 hours of talks. "But at the same time,

- Earlier, Blinken and Wang also underscored the importance of keeping lines of communication open as they lamented persistent and deepening divisions that threaten global security

the negative factors in the relationship are still increasing and building and the relationship is facing all kinds of disruptions."

"Should China and the United States keep to the right direction of moving forward with stability or return to a downward spiral?" he asked. "This is a major question before our two countries and tests our sincerity and ability." Wang also outlined, without being specific, well-known Chinese complaints about US policies and positions on the South China Sea, Taiwan, human rights and China's right to conduct relations with countries it deems fit.

Blinken responded by saying that the Biden administration places a premium on US-China dialogue even on issues of dispute. He noted there had been some progress in the past year but suggested that talks would continue to be difficult. Blinken arrived in China on Wednesday, visiting Shanghai shortly before Biden signed the USD 95 billion foreign aid package that has several elements likely to anger Beijing, including USD 8 billion to counter China's growing aggressiveness toward Taiwan and in the South China Sea. *—PTI*



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken meets with Chinese President Xi Jinping at the Great Hall of the People in China on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

# US-led effort to bring aid to war striken Gaza

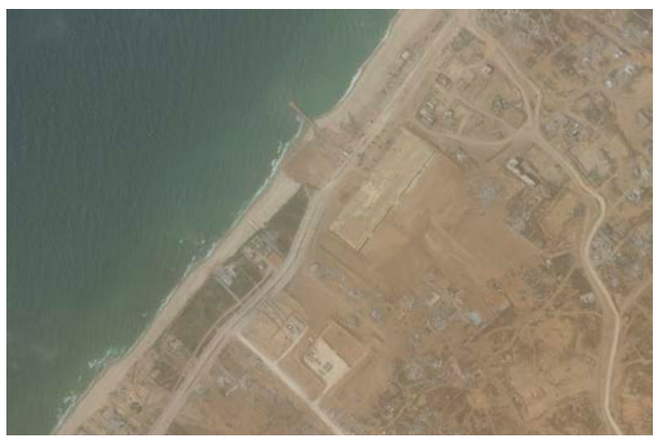
**JERUSALEM, 26 APRIL**

The construction of a new port in Gaza and an accompanying US military-built pier offshore are underway, but the complex plan to bring more desperately-needed food to Palestinian civilians is still mired in fears over security and how the humanitarian aid will be delivered.

The Israeli-developed port, for example, has already been attacked by mortar fire, sending high-ranking UN officials scrambling for shelter this week, and there is still no solid decision on when the aid deliveries will actually begin.

While satellite photos show major port construction along the shore near Gaza City, aid groups are making it clear that they have broad concerns about their safety and reservations about how Israeli forces will handle security.

Sonali Korde, an official with the US Agency for International Development, said key agreements for security and handling the aid deliveries are still being negotiated. Those include how Israeli forces will operate in Gaza to ensure that aid workers are not harmed.



The Israeli-developed port, for example, has already been attacked by mortar fire **PHOTO: PTI**

"We need to see steps implemented. And the humanitarian community and IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) continue to talk and engage and iterate and improve the system so that everyone feels safe and secure in this very difficult operating environment," Korde said.

A senior US military official said on Thursday the US is on track to begin delivering aid using the new port and pier by early May. The official, who spoke to reporters on condition of anonymity to discuss details not yet made public, said deliveries through the sea route initially will total about 90 trucks a day and could quickly increase to about 150 trucks daily.

The senior official acknowledged, however, that the final installation of the US-built causeway onto the beach at the port will be governed by the security situation, *—PTI*

### Israel slams Germany on cooperation with UN Gaza Agency

**Tel Aviv, 26 April**

Israel's Foreign Ministry called the German government's decision to renew cooperation with UNRWA (the UN Relief Works Agency) in Gaza "unfortunate and disappointing" adding that UNWRA is "part of the problem and not part of the solution." "Israel shared with Germany and other donor countries detailed information about hundreds of Hamas military operatives and many hundreds of other operatives belonging to the terrorist organizations Hamas and Islamic Jihad - all UNRA employees," said the ministry in a statement. "These are not some rotten apples - this is a rotten and poisoned tree." "The transfer of German taxpayers' money to UNRWA, whose employees are such a large proportion of Hamas operatives - an organization considered in Germany to be a terrorist organization - will not contribute to the promotion of the security and well-being of the residents of the area, Israelis and Palestinians alike," it added.

The Foreign Ministry went on to say, however, that it will continue to work "closely with the German government through all channels to channel humanitarian aid to Gaza through other agencies." *—ANI*

## AFGHANISTAN A GRAVEYARD OF GIRLS' HOPES: UN

**KABUL, 26 APRIL**

Amid restrictions imposed on women, and girls in Afghanistan under the Taliban, the United Nations has said that the country has become a "graveyard of girls' hopes", reported TOLOnews.

Emphasising its support for Afghan girls in their struggle for the right to an education in spite of the ban, the UN Women's section highlights the tenacity of Afghan girls in the face of educational prohibitions on the occasion of International Day of Girls in ICT on Thursday .

Every year the fourth Thursday of April is celebrated as the International Day of Girls in ICT (Information and Communications Technology) to honour the leadership, involvement, and empowerment of women in the field.

The Taliban, who have taken back control of Afghanistan on 15 August, 2021, have closed universities to female students and prohibited them from attending schools beyond the sixth grade.

Taliban continues to enforce the prohibition on girls attending school, even in the face of national and international criticism.

Taliban have also prohibited women to work, which has gotten worse for the nation's human and women's rights.

More than two and a half years have passed and the Taliban has yet to make any new statements regarding the reopening of schools for girls above sixth grade.

As the Taliban solidifies its control over Afghanistan, the humanitarian crisis in the country has worsened. *—ANI*

# Indian-origin student in US arrested for anti-Israel protests

**NEW YORK, 26 APRIL**

An Indian-origin female student studying at the prestigious Princeton University is among two students who have been arrested and barred from the campus for staging pro-Palestine protests on the campus.

Achinthya Sivalingan, born in Coimbatore and raised in Columbus, has been barred from the campus and faces disciplinary action, said a university spokesperson.

Protesters set up tents for a student-led pro-Palestine encampment in McCosh Courtyard at about 7 am on Thursday. After warnings from University officials, two Princeton students were arrested, and the remaining protesters packed away their camping gear and continued

- Protesters set up tents for a student-led pro-Palestine encampment in McCosh Courtyard at about 7 am on Thursday

the demonstration as a sit-in, the Princeton Alumni Weekly said in a report. About 100 undergraduate and graduate students began a sit-in on McCosh Courtyard early Thursday morning, joining a wave of pro-Palestinian sit-ins nationwide.

The protesting students are demanding that colleges cut their financial ties to Israel and divest from companies they say are enabling the deadly Gaza conflict. Some Jewish students say the protests have now become antisemitism and they are afraid to enter the campus. After student organisers first began to erect tents, Princeton Public Safety (PSAFE) issued its first warning to protesters. At least two student arrests have been made. After the initial arrests, students folded them away, the Daily Princetonian reported. *—PTI*

## Putin says plans to visit China next month: Report

**MOSCOW, 26 APRIL**

Russian President Vladimir Putin said that he has plans to visit China this May, Kyodo reported citing Russian news agency TASS.

This would mark the first overseas trip of Putin after his fifth term in office begins 7 May.

"I have a visit (to China) scheduled in May," Putin was quoted as saying in his address at the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs congress on Thursday, Kyodo reported.

The announcement by Putin came shortly after US Secretary of State Antony Blinken landed in Beijing.

Chinese President Xi Jinping and Putin had in February this year accused Washington of "interfering" in their countries' affairs during a telephone call. Xi Jinping had met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in Beijing earlier this month, marking the first face-to-face discussion between Lavrov and Xi in six years. Their last meeting in 2018 occurred just before Putin's inaugural visit to China following his re-elecion.

Since then, China and Russia intensified their economic, trade, and diplomatic collaborations, in the aftermath of Putin's war in Ukraine. *—ANI*

# S Africa will mark 30 years of freedom amid inequality and upcoming polls

**JOHANNESBUR, 26 APRIL**

As 72-year-old Nonki Kunene walks through the corridors of Thabisang Primary School in Soweto, South Africa, she recalls the joy she and many others felt 30 years ago when they voted for the first time.

It was at this school on 27 April, 1994, that Kunene joined millions of South Africans to brave long queues and take part in the country's first democratic elections after decades of white minority rule which denied Black people the right to vote.

The country is gearing up for celebrations Saturday to mark 30 years of freedom and democracy. But much of the

PHOTO: PTI

enthusiasm and optimism of that period has subsided as Africa's most developed economy faces a myriad of challenges.

Like many things in South Africa, the school that Kunene remembers has changed, and what used to be a school hall has now been turned into several classrooms.

For Makhanya and many others who stood in those queues to vote in 1994, it represented a turning point from a brutal past to the promise of a prosperous future.

But 30 years later, much of that optimism has evaporated amid the country's pressing challenges.

They include widening inequality as the country's Black majority continues to live in poverty with an unemployment rate of more than 32 per cent, the highest in the world. *—PTI*

## 155 KILLED IN TANZANIA DUE TO FLOODS

**DODOMA, 26 APRIL**

At least 155 people have lost their lives as a result of flooding and landslides caused by heavy rains in Tanzania, according to Al Jazeera.

In an address at the Parliament on Thursday, Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa said that the current rainy season has been made worse by the El Nino climate pattern, which has resulted in flooding and the destruction of roads, bridges, and railroads.

"The heavy El Nino rains, accompanied by strong winds, floods and landslides in various parts of the country, have caused significant damage," Majaliwa said.

Majaliwa went on to blame unsustainable farming methods such "slash and burn" agriculture, uncontrolled livestock grazing, and deforestation--for the disastrous impacts of the rains.

The Prime Minister stated that 51,000 houses and more than 200,000 individuals were impacted by the rains. Emergency services were rescuing those stranded by the flooding as inundated schools were closed, reported Al Jazeera.

Over 226 peopole are also injured due to floods, rains in Tanzania, as East Africa continue to batter heavy downpour.

The East African region has been pounded by heavier-than-usual rainfall during the current rainy season, with flooding also reported in neighbouring Burundi and Kenya. *—ANI*

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

# *Indian-origin man shot dead by Texas police*

**NEW YORK, 26 APRIL**

A 42-year-old Indian-origin man in the US was shot and killed by police in San Antonio after he struck two officers with his vehicle as they were trying to arrest him in connection with an aggravated assault case against a woman.

Sachin Kumar Sahoo was pronounced deceased at the scene after police officer Tyler Turner shot at him on 21 April in San Antonio, a city in Texas.

According to a preliminary investigation, officers found a 51-year-old female who had been intentionally struck by a vehicle. The suspect, Sahoo, had fled the location. Later

The accused Sachin was pronounced deceased at the scene **PHOTO: PTI**

Sahoo returned to the original location. Officers tried to contact him when he struck two officers with his BMW SUV. One officer fired his weapon, striking Sahoo, who was "pronounced deceased on scene." *—PTI*

### US envoy ensures safety for Indian students in America

**New Delhi, 26 April**

Amid the ongoing pro-Palestine protests rocking US universities, the ambassador of the US to India Eric Garcetti on Friday stressed that the opinions should be expressed in a 'peaceful' manner, underlining that 'nobody should feel threatened'.Asked whether it is a concern for India as Indian students study in US universities, the spokesperson said, "As far as your question regarding Indian students is concerned, we are always in touch with Indian students and as and when there are issues which have to be resolved, we will look into it." *—ANI*

## Rupee falls 7 paise to settle at 83.35 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 26 APRIL

The rupee declined 7 paise to close at 83.35 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday as a strengthening American currency overseas and a selloff in domestic equities weighed on the local unit. Besides, rising crude prices in the international market and risk-averse sentiment dragged the local unit down, forex traders said. The local unit opened strong at 83.30 and moved in the range of 83.30-83.36 during the session. The local currency finally settled at 83.35 against the dollar, registering a fall of 7 paise from its previous close. In the previous session, the rupee closed at 83.28 against the US dollar. The global oil benchmark, rose 0.38 per cent to USD 89.35 per barrel. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, increased 0.05 per cent to 105.49. —*PTI*

## Gold jumps ₹350; silver bounces ₹600

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

Gold and silver prices jumped in the national capital on Friday amid strong trends in the overseas markets, according to HDFC Securities. The precious metal prices rose by Rs 350 to Rs 72,850 per 10 grams. It had closed at Rs 72,500 per 10 grams in the previous session. Silver prices also jumped Rs 600 to Rs 84,700 per kg. In the previous close, it had finished at Rs 84,100 per kg. In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,340 per ounce, up by USD 21 from the previous close. Gold prices increased following the release of the US GDP data on Thursday, which pointed to a significant economic slowdown and ongoing inflationary pressures. Silver was also quoted higher at USD 27.55 per ounce. In the previous trade, it closed at USD 27.20 per ounce. Comex gold received short-term support at USD 2,300 level and traded higher at USD 2,348 per ounce. —*PTI*

## Bajaj Finance shares tank nearly 8 pc post earnings

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

Shares of Bajaj Finance on Friday tanked nearly 8 per cent after the company's March quarter earnings failed to cheer investors. The stock declined 7.64 per cent to Rs 6,736.15 on the BSE. On the NSE, it tumbled 7.60 per cent to Rs 6,740. Bajaj Finance on Thursday reported a 21 per cent rise in consolidated net profit to Rs 3,825 crore for the March quarter. The non-banking finance company (NBFC) had registered a net profit of Rs 3,158 crore in the same period a year ago. Net interest income increased 28 per cent during the fourth quarter of the previous fiscal year to Rs 8,013 crore from Rs 6,254 crore a year ago. The company said its gross Non-performing Assets (NPAs) and net NPAs as of March 2024 stood at 0.85 per cent and 0.37 per cent, respectively.—*PTI*

## Schaeffler India profit rises 4 pc to Rs 228 crore in March

MUMBAI, 26 APRIL

Schaeffler India has reported a 3.8 per cent year-on-year rise in net profit at Rs 227.7 crore in the January-March quarter of 2024. The company had posted a net profit of Rs 219.4 crore during the same period a year ago. Schaeffler India follows the January-December period as the financial year. Revenue from operations during the reporting quarter stood at Rs 1,849.2 crore as compared to Rs 1,693.6 crore in the corresponding quarter of 2023, Schaeffler India said. Harsha Kadam, Managing Director, said, "Year 2024 started well for us as we registered a strong YoY growth in our domestic business. Margins for the quarter remained resilient despite seasonality in some of our sectors. "With a good rebound in our intercompany exports for the quarter, we remain cautiously optimistic of the challenging and volatile macroeconomic environment," he added.—*PTI*

# Market stocks slump after 4 days gain

### Sensex tanked 609.28 points to settle at 73,730.16

MUMBAI, 26 APRIL

Market benchmarks Sensex and Nifty wilted under selling pressure on Friday after a five-day rally as investors pared exposure to banking, financial and consumer durable stocks amid mixed trends in global markets. Rising global crude prices, a depreciating rupee and persistent foreign fund outflows further weighed on sentiment, traders said. Profit-taking also came into play as the 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 609.28 points or 0.82 per cent to settle at 73,730.16. During the day, it lost 722.79 points or 0.97 per cent to 73,616.65. The NSE Nifty declined 150.40 points or 0.67 per cent to 22,419.95.

Bajaj Finance was the biggest drag on the Sensex chart, skidding nearly 8 per cent after the company's March quarter earnings failed to cheer investors. Bajaj Finserv also declined over 3 per cent. IndusInd Bank, Nestle, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Mahindra & Mahindra were among the other laggards.

NSE Nifty declined 150.40 points 22,419.95 **PHOTO: PTI**

Wipro, ITC, UltraTech Cement, Titan and Axis Bank were among the gainers.

The fall was on expected lines as both the benchmark indices had rallied for five straight sessions, and profit-taking has been due for some time. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory. European markets were trading in the green. Wall Street ended lower on Thursday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.31 per cent to USD 89.29 a barrel. The rupee declined 7 paise to close at 83.35 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 2,823.33 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data. The BSE benchmark climbed 486.50 points or 0.66 per cent to settle at 74,339.44 on Thursday. The NSE Nifty advanced 167.95 points or 0.75 per cent to 22,570.35. —*PTI*

## TECH MAHINDRA SHARES ZOOM OVER 13 PER CENT

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

Shares of Tech Mahindra on Friday surged over 13 per cent after the company's CEO outlined an ambitious three-year roadmap to accelerate revenue growth and lift margins. The stock jumped 13 per cent to Rs 1,344.95 on the BSE. At the NSE, it climbed 13.16 per cent to Rs 1,347.

The company's market capitalisation moved up by Rs 10,754.85 crore to Rs 1,26,705.84 crore. It emerged as the biggest gainer on both the BSE Sensex and NSE Nifty. The IT services company on Thursday reported 41 per cent fall in consolidated net profit for the March quarter to Rs 661 crore amid weakness in the communications vertical, even as its CEO outlined an ambitious three-year roadmap to boost revenue growth and lift margins.

The top brass acknowledged that the Q4 results marked a "low point" in the company's growth trajectory but exuded confidence that year-on-year improvement will become visible starting the first quarter. Tech Mahindra CEO Mohit Joshi said the company hopes to come back to growth in H2 FY25. In Q4 FY24, the company's revenue dropped by 6.2 per cent year-on-year to Rs 12,871 crore. —*PTI*

**EFFECT OF RBI ACTION**

# Kotak Bank could restrain credit growth, says S&P

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

S&P Global Ratings on Friday said RBI's regulatory action on Kotak Mahindra Bank could restrain the lender's credit growth and profitability.

The RBI on Wednesday barred Kotak Mahindra Bank from issuing fresh credit cards and onboarding new customers online.

Credit cards are a higher-yielding target growth segment for Kotak Mahindra Bank. This portfolio grew at 52 per cent year-on-year as of December 31, 2023, compared with total loan growth of 19 per cent, the US-based rating agency said.

RBI's actions on Kotak Mahindra Bank follow similar actions in recent years on other financial institutions in India.

S&P said in a similar case in 2020, when HDFC Bank was temporarily barred from sourcing new credit card customers, it took the bank more than a year to meet the RBI's requirements and have restrictions lifted.

**PHOTO: PTI**

In the past 18 months, Kotak Mahindra Bank has made significant progress on technological enhancements, including the hiring of senior level executives in the chief technology officer and chief experience officer positions, S&P said.

Nevertheless, it will take time for the bank to implement changes and conduct a comprehensive external audit to address the RBI's concerns.

RBI's actions on Kotak Mahindra Bank follow several outages of the bank's core banking systems as well as online and digital banking channels, and deficiencies identified through the RBI's IT examinations in 2022 and 2023. —PTI

# Reliance Limited gets thumbs-up from Fitch

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

Reliance Industries Ltd has won a vote of confidence from global rating agencies S&P and Fitch after its robust earnings in the fiscal year ended 31 March, 2024, supported its growth aspirations and kept leverage under check.

S&P Global Ratings and Fitch Ratings in separate notes spoke of its EBITDA (loosely known as pre-tax profit) rising in the current fiscal year and next on rising revenue and past investments.

The oil-to-telecom-and-retail conglomerate's growth aspirations remain intact, it said, adding the company has ramped up investments in the media business in recent months.

In 2024, it entered into binding definitive agreements with The Walt Disney Co for a media joint venture in which RIL will invest Rs 11,500 crore. The company subsequently agreed to buy Paramount Global's 13.01 per

**PHOTO: PTI**

cent stake in local entertainment network Viacom18 Media Pte Ltd for about Rs 4,300 crore.

Meanwhile, earnings in the oil and gas as well as retail segments will reap the rewards of increased production volume and a wider retail store network.

Upstream oil and gas EBITDA should stay at around Rs 20,000 crore in FY25 (FY24: Rs 20,200 crore), assisted by the expectation of a 10 per cent increase in gas production in the first full year of operation of three gas fields in the KG-D6 block, which should offset the potential reduction in price realisation with lower gas prices. —*PTI*

**MULTIPLE PRICE-BASED METHOD**

# RBI announces auction sale of govt securities of Rs 32,000

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

Reserve Bank of India has announced the auction for the sale of Government Securities worth Rs 32,000 crore. The auction is scheduled to take place on Friday and it aims to facilitate the sale (re-issue) of Government Securities through a multiple price-based method.

The primary dealers can submit their bids electronically through the E-Kuber System between 9.00am and 9.30am on Friday.

According to RBI the Under the primary dealers are required to fulfill Minimum Underwriting Commitment (MUC) and minimum bidding commitment under Additional Competitive Underwriting (ACU) for the auction.

The underwriting commission will be credited to the current account of the respective primary dealers with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on the day of the issue of securities. This auction presents an opportunity for primary dealers to participate in the underwriting process and contribute to the government's financing activities.

The auction signifies the government's continued efforts to manage its borrowing program efficiently and meet its funding requirements. With the auction scheduled for April 26, RBI urges primary dealers to prepare and participate actively to support the smooth conduct of the auction and ensure successful outcomes for all stakeholders.

In India, the Central Government issues both, treasury bills and bonds or dated securities while the State Governments issue only bonds or dated securities, which are called the State Development Loans (SDLs). G-Secs carry practically no risk of default and, hence, are called risk-free gilt-edged instruments. —*ANI*

It signifies government's efforts to manage its requirements **PHOTO: PTI**

## DELOITTE PROJECTS INDIA'S FY25 GDP GROWTH AT 6.6 PC

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

Deloitte India on Friday said it estimates India's GDP growth at 6.6 per cent in the current fiscal helped by consumption expenditure, exports rebound and capital flows.

Deloitte said the rapid growth of the middle-income class has led to rising purchasing power and even created demand for premium luxury products and services.

The country's GDP growth is estimated to reach around 6.6 per cent in FY 2024-25 and 6.75 per cent in the year after, as markets learn to factor in geopolitical uncertainties in their investment and consumption decisions.

Government investments in infrastructure and initiatives such as Future Skills Prime 2021 for skill enhancement and Ayushman Bharat for health improvements are expected to enhance employability. Despite the necessity for credit growth to stimulate economic activity, RBI will have to monitor rising household debt. — *PTI*

# Forex kitty drops USD 2.28 bn to USD 640.33 bn

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

India's forex reserves decreased USD 2.282 billion to USD 640.334 billion for the seven days ended 19 April in the second consecutive week of drop in the kitty, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said on Friday.

The reserves had dropped USD 5.401 billion to USD 643.162 billion in the previous reporting week, ending a multi-week trend of an increase, which also saw the overall reserves touching a new all-time high of USD 648.562 billion for the week ended 5 April.

In September 2021, the country's forex kitty had reached a high of USD 642.453 billion, which was breached in March this year.

It also saw overall reserves touching new all-time high of USD **PHOTO: PTI**

The reserves took a hit as the central bank deployed the kitty to defend the rupee amid pressures caused majorly by global events, but there had been a steady accretion over the past few months.

For the week ended April 19, the foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased USD 3.793 billion to USD 560.86 billion, according to the data released on Friday.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound, and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

Gold reserves continued to rise and increased USD 1.01 billion to USD 56.808 billion during the week, the RBI said. —*PTI*

# Capria closes Rs 153 crore India Opportunity Fund

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

Capria Ventures on Friday said it has closed its Rs 153 crore India Opportunity Fund after receiving multi-fold return from exiting HR tech firm Awign.

The venture capital firm has sold its stake in Awign to Japan-based human resource solutions provider Mynavi Corporation.

Capital from the first close of this fund was invested in the breakout leaders of its early-stage funds (Capria India Fund I and Capria India Fund II), such as Awign, BetterPlace, Cuemath, Eduvanz, and Masai.

**PHOTO: PTI**

According to Capria, Awign has seen 20 times growth in revenue since Capria first led its seed round investment in 2018. —*PTI*

**AMID HEAT WAVE**

# *Vegetable prices to remain high until June*

NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL

Vegetable prices are expected to remain high till June due to above-normal temperatures, posing challenges for consumers across India.

According to a report by CRISIL, this trend, driven by erratic weather patterns and climate change, highlights the vulnerability of vegetable prices to environmental factors.

The report also highlights that despite attempts by stakeholders to address the issue through various measures like creating buffer stocks and importing vegetables, the perishable nature of vegetables limits the effectiveness of such solutions. Additionally, India does not have adequate infrastructure such as cold storage facilities which further complicates the efforts to stabilize prices.

The report further states India as one of the most climatically vulnerable countries, faces increasing risks to vegetable production and prices due to extreme weather conditions such as heat waves, flooding, and storms. Rising temperatures further exacerbate pest problems, adding to the challenges faced by farmers and consumers alike.

India witnessed significant fluctuations in inflation **PHOTO: PTI**

During the fiscal 2024, India witnessed significant fluctuations in vegetable inflation, with prices soaring to high levels. While tomatoes and onions often grab headlines, other vegetables like garlic, ginger, brinjal, parwal, and beans also experienced sharp price increases.

The impact of turbulent weather conditions, including El Nino-induced warmth and below-normal southwest monsoon, was evident in the disrupted supply chain anddiminished crop yields. Rising temperatures exacerbate pest problems, affecting v egetable production and prices.

- According to a report by CRISIL, this trend, driven by erratic weather patterns and climate change, highlights the vulnerability of vegetable prices to environmental factors

The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast an above-normal southwest monsoon this year but the distribution of rainfall remains a crucial factor.

As India grapples with the challenges posed by climate change and extreme weather events, stakeholders must prioritize resilience-building measures in the agricultural sector. Addressing infrastructure gaps and implementing sustainable farming practices are essential to mitigate the impact of climate variability on vegetable production and prices. —*PTI*

# TikTok will not be sold, Chinese parent tells US

UNITED STATES, 26 APRIL

TikTok's Chinese parent company ByteDance says it has no intention of selling the business after the US passed a law to force it to sell the hugely popular video app or be banned in America.

TikTok did not immediately respond to a request for comment from the BBC.

Earlier this week, TikTok said it would challenge in court "unconstitutional" law.

The statement from ByteDance came in response to an article by the technology industry website The Information that said it was exploring the potential sale of TikTok's operation in the US without the algorithm that powers it. The sell-or-ban measure was signed into law by US President Joe Biden on Wednesday.

Beijing's tightening grip on private companies has raised concerns in the US, and other Western countries, about how much control the Chinese Communist Party has over ByteDance, and the data it holds. TikTok has repeatedly denied claims the Chinese government has control over ByteDance.

**PHOTO: PTI**

According to TikTok, ByteDance's Chinese founder owns 20% of shares, through a controlling stake in the company. The Chinese government has also dismissed such concerns as paranoia and has warned that a TikTok ban would "inevitably come back to bite the US".

The new law gives ByteDance nine months to sell the business, and an additional three-month grace period, before a potential ban can be enforced. —*BBC News*

PHOTO: PTI

## World Cup: Deepika ousts Korean rival to make semis

**SHANGHAI, 26 APRIL**

Continuing her spirited progress post-motherhood, former world number one Deepika Kumari eliminated Korean Jeon Hunyoung to storm into the semifinal, while compound archers continued to shine to assure India a fourth medal in the World Cup Stage 1 here on Friday. Deepika, the three-time Olympian, who has slipped to world No. 142 and qualified as 30th seed in the rankings round, overcame a 1-3 deficit to defeat Jeon 6-4 (27-28, 27-27, 29-28, 29-27, 28-28) in the women's recurve individual quarterfinal.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

## Shooter Sift races ahead on the road to Paris

**NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL**

Sift Kaur Samra stole a march over her four Olympic Selection Trial (OST) rivals in the women's 50m rifle 3 positions (3P), winning back-to-back competitions at the Dr. Karni Singh Shooting range on Friday. Aishwarya Pratap Singh Tomar also entered the OST winner's circle, claiming the men's 3P T2 final in a classic 0.22 scrap to the finish line. Sift, the reigning Asian Games champion, world record holder, and the undisputed India number one in women's 3P for some time now, shot 465.1 in the OST T2 final, to leave Ashi Choksey 2.4 behind in second. Anjum Moudgil was third, after coming second-best in a shoot-off with Ashi. Shriyanka Sadangi and Nishchal came in fourth and fifth.—*PTI*

## Senthilkumar enter quarters of PSA events

**NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL**

Top-seeded Indian Velavan Senthilkumar eased past Frenchman Matteo Carrouget in straight games to move into the quarterfinals of the Batch Open squash, a USD 12,000 PSA Challenger Tour event in Paris. National champion Senthilkumar, ranked 58th in the world, beat Carrouget 11-4 11-6 11-7 in 29 minutes in the second round on Thursday night after receiving a bye in the opening round. He will meet fifth seed Jakub Solnicky of the Czech Republic in the quarterfinals.—*AP*

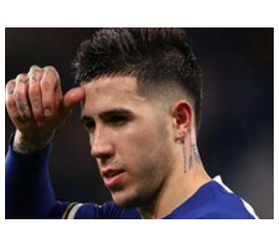


PHOTO: AFP

## Chelsea's Fernandez undergoes surgery, to miss season

**LONDON, 26 APRIL**

Enzo Fernandez has undergone surgery and will miss the remainder of Chelsea's season. The Premier League club posted an injury update on social media Friday saying the 23-year-old midfielder "has undergone successful surgery on a groin issue and will now begin a period of rehabilitation." The Argentina international is expected to be available for the Copa America staged in the United States in June and July.—*AP*

# Upbeat Delhi take on struggling MI

## MI will strengthen their claim to a playoff spot

**NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL**

Bolstered by Rishabh Pant's brilliant batting form and inspiring leadership, the resurrected Delhi Capitals will aim to continue their upward march in the IPL points table when they take on an inconsistent Mumbai Indians here on Saturday.

The Capitals have endured a rollercoaster season, showing flashes of brilliance while also succumbing to embarrassing defeats.

But three wins in the last four matches have helped them climb to the sixth spot and a win against MI will strengthen their claim to a playoff spot.

On the other hand, after a familiar poor start, MI bounced back with three wins in their next four matches but a comprehensive nine-wicket thrashing by Rajasthan Royals put an end to their resurgence. They are tottering on the eighth place on the points table and can ill-afford to lose.

DC's biggest positive has undoubtedly been skipper Rishabh Pant's form, which appears to improve with each game.

He has looked sharp behind the stumps and seems to be batting with freedom. He was at his belligerent best during a match-winning unbeaten knock against Gujarat Titans on Wednesday. The southpaw is in a prime position to make India's squad for the T20 World Cup despite stiff opposition from the likes of Sanju Samson, Dinesh Karthik, and Ishan Kishan. —*PTI*

Rishabh Pant during a practice session **PVHOTO: PTI**

**TODAY'S MATCH**

Time: 3:30 PM

Where To Watch:

**Jio Cinema, Star Sports Network**

**Stadium**: Arun Jaitley Stadium, Delhi

# RR looks to continue winning run

## Riyan has been the flavor of the season for RR

**LUCKNOW, 26 APRIL**

High-flying Rajasthan Royals will look to continue their winning momentum and consolidate their position at the top when they take on a resurgent Lucknow Super Giants, who will be gunning for revenge at home in an IPL match here on Saturday.

Former champions RR have looked in ominous form this season with seven wins from eight games, and they could be a tough nut to crack for LSG.

LSG, meanwhile, has played some good cricket and is placed fourth with five wins from eight games.

But going into Saturday's match, RR would certainly be the favorites as they have registered a hat-trick of victories after a rare blip against Gujarat Titans.

Assam batter Riyan Parag has been the flavor of the season for RR in the batting department. The youngster reinvented himself and has been the team's highest scorer with 318 runs from eight games.

The return to form of Yashasvi Jaiswal, who was struggling a bit this season, has further strengthened RR's batting. While chasing a 180-run target in the last game against Mumbai Indians, Jaiswal smashed an unbeaten 104 off 60 balls to power his side to a comfortable nine-wicket win.

RR also boasts of a potent bowling attack comprising the experienced Trent Boult, Avesh Khan, and Sandeep Sharma. —*PTI*

KL Rahul and Sanju Samson **PHOTO: PTI**

**TODAY'S MATCH**

Time: 7:30 PM

Where To Watch:

**Jio Cinema, Star Sports Network**

**Stadium**: Ekana Sports City, Lucknow

**SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN'S OPEN**

# Golf: Diksha shoots 73 to be T-53

**DUBAI, 26 APRIL**

Diksha Dagar shot 1-over 73 to be T-53rd after the opening day at the South African Women's Open at the par-72 Erinvale Country & Golf Estate.

Tvesa Malik was 1-over after 16 holes, while Ridhima DIlawari carded 2-over 74 and Vani Kapoor scored 3-over 75. England's Rosie. Davies shared the early lead with Switzerland's Elena Moosman with 6-under 66 each.

Moosman, 22, has come through the LET Access Series.Last year Diksha had one win in the Czech Republic and two Top-3 finishes in the German Masters and Women's Indian Open, among her 10 Top-10s.

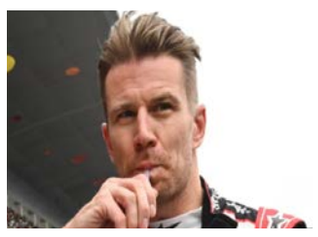
This season she already has three Top-10 finishes.In the opening round, she had four birdies and five bogeys. She was always fighting to stay in the round and It was a constant battle she was never better than 1-under nor was she ever worse than 1-over, which is where she finished.

On the back nine, twice she had back-to-back bogeys, and once she had back-to-back birdies.

Also, at one-over and T-53 was Tvesa Malik, a multiple-time winner on her home Tour, the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour, was 1-over with one more hole to play. Ridhima Dilawari with three birdies and five bogeys was 2-over and in Tied-67th place while Vani Kapoor had an interesting round with an eagle on par-4 fifth hole followed by a double bogey on Par-4 sixth.

—*AP*

Diksha Dagar shot 1-over 73 to be T-53rd after the opening day at the South African Women's Open **PHOTO: AFP**



Nico Hulkenberg **PHOTO: AFP**

## F1: HULKENBERG TO LEAVE HAAS

**HINWIL, 26 APRIL**

German Formula 1 driver Nico Hulkenberg will leave Haas at the end of the season to join Sauber in 2025, the two teams confirmed on Friday.

The German racer signed a multi-year deal with Sauber and in 2026 will become the first driver for Audi's entry into the F1.

Nico joined hands with Haas in 2023 after three years of gap from a full-time F1 circuit and has been one of the grid's in-form drivers this season. —*AP*

# Nethra secures Paris Olympics quota

**NEW DELHI, 26 APRIL**

- Nethra Kumanan on Friday secured India's second Paris Olympics quota in sailing, claiming it under the Emerging Nations Program banner at the Last Chance Regatta, an Olympic qualifier, in Hyeres, France.

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Nethra, who competed in the Tokyo Games three years ago, was competing in the women's dinghy (ILCA 6).

Nethra managed 67 net points to finish fifth on the overall leaderboard. However, she secured the Olympic quota as the top performer among sailors from the Emerging Nations Program (ENP) who had not yet obtained a quota.

World Sailing, the world governing body for the sport, aims to help athletes from less well-known sailing nations make an impact at the top level through its ENP program.

The top three sailors first secured the Olympic quotas in the women's dinghy - Romania's Ebru Bolat (36 net points), Marilena Makri of Cyprus (37 net points), and Slovenia's Lin Pletikos (54 net points).

Six-time Olympian Tatiana Drozdovskaya (59 net points), competing as an individual neutral athlete, came fourth and missed out.

The Last Chance Regatta is the final qualifying event in sailing for the Paris 2024 Olympics. —*PTI*

# Theegala-Zalatoris team placed T-29th

Sahith Theegala and Will Zalatoris **PHOTO: AFP**

**AVONDALE, 26 APRIL**

Indian-American golfer Sahith Theegala and his partner Will Zalatoris returned a blemish-free card of seven-under 65 in the opening round to lay tied 29th in the Zurich Classic of New Orleans golf tournament, which is the PGA Tour's only team event.

Rory McIlroy and Shane Lowry shot an 11-under 61 in four-ball play for a share of the first-round lead.

The New Orleans is the only time that players play together as a team on the Tour, as opposed to only individual events through the season.

The Irish duo shared the lead with the teams of Ryan Brehm-Mark Hubbard, Ben Kohles-Patton Kizzire, and Aaron Rai-David Lipsky. Theegala and Zalatoris struck seven birdies, four on the back-nine, in a good start. Davis Thompson-Andrew Novak, Thomas Detry-Robert MacIntyre, and Cameron Champ-M.J. Daffue were at 62.

Twenty teams were nine-under or better on a crowded leaderboard at TPC Louisiana. McIlroy had the team's first three birdies, although on the par-five second Lowry was inches away. —*PTI*

Nethra Kumana secures India's second Paris 2024 quota in sailing **PHOTO: IANS**

# Nadal wishes he could play long enough for his son

**PARIS, 26 APRIL**

Rafael Nadal said he would love to keep playing long enough for his son to remember him on the court, though the 22-time Grand Slam champion concedes time is not on his side.

The 37-year-old Spaniard, who has said he expects to retire after the 2024 season, returned to competition in Brisbane in January after almost a year sidelined with a hip flexor injury.

He was then out for another stretch due to a thigh issue and while he returned in Barcelona last week, he says he is far from being in top form and does not know if he will play in next month's French Open.

Nadal beat wild card Darwin Blanch 6-1, 6-0 in the first round of the Madrid Open on Thursday, with his wife and one-year-old son Rafael Jr. watching on.

"Well, I would love to play a little bit longer and give him a memory of myself playing tennis," Nadal said of playing in front of his son.

"That's what will be the ideal thing for me, and for my wife and family.

"Probably I will not be able to make that happen. But at least I'm happy to have a great team, family, and friends around me all my life that helped me in every single way to be happy."

Nadal, a five-time champion in Madrid, next faces Australian 10th seed Alex de Minaur on Saturday. —*AP*

37-year-old Rafael Nadal and Darwin Blanch **PHOTO: AFP**

**PREMIER LEAGUE**

# *Man City crush Brighton to title race*

**LONDON, 26 APRIL**

Manchester City demolished Brighton 4-0 as Phil Foden's double lifted the Premier League title chasers to within one point of leaders Arsenal on Thursday. Pep Guardiola's side were in an imperious mood at the Amex Stadium from the moment Kevin De Bruyne headed them into an early lead.

England forward Foden struck twice before the interval to put the result beyond doubt. Julian Alvarez ended his goal drought after half-time to ensure injured striker Erling Haaland wasn't missed as his absence with a muscle problem stretched to a second successive game. "It is a good result for us, really good," Guardiola said. "I said before, what we have done in the past, does not mean we will do it in the future.

"We know the margins are so tight. We have to win everyone.

Julian Alvarez ended his goal drought after half-time in Erling Haaland's absence **PHOTO: AFP**

- Manchester City demolished Brighton 4-0 as Phil Foden's double lifted the Premier League title chasers to within one point of leaders Arsenal on Thursday. Pep Guardiola's side were in an imperious mood at the Amex Stadium from the moment Kevin De Bruyne headed them into an early lead.

Each game we are closer."

Liverpool's surprise defeat at Everton on Wednesday was a welcome boost for City in the title race after Arsenal had thrashed Chelsea 5-0 on Tuesday.

And City's stroll on the south coast kept the destiny of the title in their hands. Guardiola's team, who have a game in hand on both Arsenal and third-placed Liverpool, will be crowned champions for an unprecedented fourth successive season if they win their last five matches.

With at least four goals in each of their last four league games, City are rounding into form at just the right moment once again.

But Guardiola warned: "What happened to Liverpool, two defeats in a row, it can happen to Arsenal, it can happen to us.

"What is important is that still we are there. There are a lot of games to play."

Next up for City, who are unbeaten in 18 league games, is a trip to Nottingham Forest on Sunday, while Arsenal head to Tottenham just hours earlier. —*AP*